



WORLD WATCH ONE

October 2016





WORLD WATCH ONE ☯ CHICAGO BUREAU OFFICE

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Front Cover: Buckaroo Banzai on a special edition Blu-ray at last! Cover artist Dan Berger created this image of Buckaroo by hand rotoscoping and tweaking the classic photo of Dr. Banzai and the Hong Kong Cavaliers, taken during their victory march at the Sepulveda Basin Flood Control area.

In addition to the cover, Dan has cooked up a number of “Johnny-on-the-spot” graphic elements for the newsletter over the years, many of which you will find tucked into the narrow spaces at the ends of articles that wouldn’t completely fill a page otherwise.

For a review of the Shout! Factory Blu-ray release, turn the page and start reading until you get to the end. We put it all the way back there so you had to work for it.

Questions? Comments? Unexpected ninja infestation? We’re here for you. Contact us at dan.berger.2@gmail.com.

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**WORLD WATCH ONE**NEWSLETTER OF TEAM BANZAI

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**The Feast after the Famine**

The problem with writing a newsletter about a thirty-some-year-old film is that the news can get a little thin as the decades march on. The last *World Watch One* of all original material previous to this issue was published in June of 2010. A "greatest hits" edition of the newsletter appeared at two screenings of the film in 2011. But *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai's* 30th anniversary came and went in 2014 without a newsletter to mark the occasion, the first time we've missed a five year anniversary of the film since the newsletter's editorial reboot back in 2004. After five years of measurable, if uneven, Banzai comics publishing from Moonstone Books, the latest chapter in the Buckaroo Banzai saga simply began to run short on ink.

That's not to say that Buckaroo disappeared from the face of the planet over the last six years. The film has experienced new life in theaters of late, including a New York Film Festival screening and Wright Stuff Film Festival appearance in 2011, both of which receive reports later in this issue. Your editor had the pleasure of sponsoring a 2014 Sci-Fi Spectacular film festival screening of the film in Chicago on behalf of the now defunct Foes of Reality science fiction news website. It's satisfying to see people enjoying Buckaroo on big screens again, but if screening reports are all you have for newsletter fodder, that's a problem.

Fortunately, it hasn't been an enduring problem.

After two different foreign Blu-ray releases of what amounted to variations on the Special Edition DVD released in 2002, *Buckaroo Banzai* has received a proper Blu-ray edition from the folks at SHOUT! Factory this August. The disc includes new never-before-seen interviews with the cast, crew, and creators of the film. The Blu-ray release has also prompted more convention appearances by the cast, including Lewis "Perfect Tommy" Smith, whose interview is featured later in this issue. As if that wasn't enough, reports of a Kevin Smith produced *Buckaroo Banzai* television series on Amazon Prime streaming video have littered the internet of late. It's not the first time someone has taken a crack at bringing Buckaroo to the small screen. Could this be the time we actually see a weekly series happen?

Thirty years of appreciating *Buckaroo Banzai* as a fan and twelve years of writing about him in this newsletter rarely provide one with new things to talk about. The 1990s were a Banzai famine that none of us want to see repeated. And today's television rumblings are not the only indicators of new Banzai goodness in our future. What does the latest feast hold in store? If Buckaroo has taught us anything over the years, it's to expect the unexpected. Stay tuned.

--DB

Acknowledgements: Special thanks go to W. D. Richter, Earl Mac Rauch, and Lewis Smith for being the primary victims of the interview hot seat in this issue. Thanks also to Mike Okuda at the Banzai Institute website and Facebook page for his generous assistance not only to this newsletter, but to Banzai fandom in general. We extend our appreciation to Dan Berger, Matt Haley, and Mike Okuda for creating several of the graphic elements that appear in this issue. Many thanks to all of our contributors: Dan Berger, Rich Drees, Steve Mattsson, Sean Murphy, Alan Smith, and Scott Tate. Thanks also go out to Chris "ArcLight" Wike for his assistance in writing "The Blue Blaze Irregulars Bite the Big Apple" that appears in this issue, as well as hosting the newsletter's presence on the interwebs at the [World Watch OnLine library](#).

This issue's Perseverance Award goes to Sean Murphy for sticking through fourteen drafts of "The Quest for the Official Buckaroo Banzai Soundtrack" in this issue. The origins of the article extend back many years, most spent in what turned out to be a fruitless attempt to pin down Michael Boddicker for an interview, and not for lack of trying. Thank you, Sean, for sticking with it. The results were worth the wait.

This issue's Blue Blaze Irregular of the month award goes to Steve Mattsson for going above and beyond the call of duty in tracking down stories, interviewing Banzai people of interest, writing and editing articles, and prodding the editor-in-chief to pull together this latest giant of a newsletter/fanzine/whatever-it-has-mutated-into-over-the-last-decade. Rainbow Kitty, we salute you.

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Submissions to World Watch One are strongly encouraged. You got 'em? We'll take 'em! Please contact us at dan.berger.2@gmail.com for details.

Same Time Next Week:

The Movie Serial Roots of *Buckaroo Banzai*

By Scott Tate

It's an observation many people have made over the years, all the way back to the original theatrical run. Even *The New York Times* mentioned in the very first sentence of its review that watching *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* "is like coming into the middle chapters of some hilariously overplotted, spaced-out 1930's adventure serial."

Serials were once a regular part of the movie theater experience. They emerged in the silent era, had their Golden Age in the 1930s and '40s, and lingered into the '50s. Serials were movies split into short installments, with new "chapters" running fifteen or twenty minutes apiece and spaced a week apart. Like Scheherazade reciting her stories over the course of a thousand and one Arabian nights, they built suspense and kept audiences intrigued, luring them back week after week to keep ticket sales steady. This tied directly into a stylistic approach embraced by most serials: ending each chapter with a cliffhanger, pausing at a dramatic point in the action to maximize the tension and anticipation. Serials were often cranked out hastily and on tight budgets as the less prestigious cousins of bigger Hollywood productions, but for all their rough edges, they sometimes appealed in ways that more serious films couldn't match.

By the time *Buckaroo Banzai* came out in 1984, serials were a thing of the past. But just as *Buckaroo Banzai's* plot is built upon events that began in 1938, so too is much of its style and tone influenced by the traditions inherent in these old serials.

Dawn of the Serials

Serials have been with us nearly as long as movies themselves. Their origins reach back at least as far as 1910, overlapping with the first real generation of moviemakers and moviegoers. Film historians generally agree that the first known serial was a German production, *Arsene Lupin contra Sherlock Holmes*, pitting a famous gentleman thief from French literature against the great detective from British literature. This set an early precedent for serials to borrow characters from other media — starting with traditional novels and expanding over time to include pulp magazines, newspaper strips, radio programs, and comic books. Original characters were featured as well, but serials were both quick and persistent in their embracing of popular culture.

The earliest serials established trends that would remain forever associated with the medium. There were strong elements of melodrama and danger, such as in *The Perils of Pauline*, first filmed in 1914 and again in 1933, then remade as a feature film in 1947. There were mysterious masked criminals, such as the deadly *Fantomas* (1913) and mysterious masked champions of justice, such as the now largely forgotten *Judex* (1916), strikingly similar in many ways to *The Shadow* and *Batman*, but predating



them both by many years. Exotic adventure stories were also popular, such as adaptations of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan*. Between 1920 and 1935 there were at least six *Tarzan* serials, most of them produced independently of each other, with separate studios slapping loincloths on their own actors.

Pulp and Radio Heroes Invade the Serials

Serials were conceived and came into their own alongside their closest print media analog, pulp magazines. Rampant cross-pollination quickly followed, not just between the pulps and the serials but also with popular radio dramas of the day. Many of the most popular characters could be found in all three.

It was among those pulp and radio characters that *Buckaroo Banzai's* closest counterparts could be found: colorful larger-than-life adventurers, undeniably heroic but not quite full-blown superheroes by modern standards.

We've already mentioned *Tarzan* as a serial star. His debut came in *All-Story* magazine in 1912, and he also had his share of radio dramas over the years, beginning in 1932.

No character loomed larger in the pulps or on the radio than The Shadow, who debuted on the air in 1930 then moved into print and films in 1931. He was originally conceived as a narrative gimmick rather than a character in his own right, but soon became the main focus. At the height of his popularity around 1937 and '38, he was showcased in a pair of feature-length films, and more features would follow in later years, but in between he came to the serials, entitled simply *The Shadow* (1940).

The role of the Shadow has been performed by many actors over the years, but the most famous remains the relatively brief radio tenure of Orson Welles. It was soon after leaving the role that Welles gave that other famous radio performance of his, the Halloween 1938 broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*, which factors into events from *Buckaroo Banzai*.

The Spider, created in 1933 by a rival publisher to compete with The Shadow, wove his way into serials a few years later with *The Spider's Web* (1938) and *The Spider Returns* (1941). Chandu the Magician, created for radio in 1932, was adapted into a feature-length film that same year, but the film's sequel, *The Return of Chandu* (1934) was produced as a serial instead of a feature. The Green Hornet, the stylish masked hero who poses as a criminal to better infiltrate the underworld, was created for radio in 1936, then adapted for serials in *The Green Hornet* (1940) and *The Green Hornet Strikes Again!* (1941).

It may be interesting to note that out of all the pulp characters who inspired serials, one who never made that leap is the same one most often compared directly to Buckaroo: Doc Savage, who didn't get a film treatment until *Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze* in 1975. However, the comparison with Buckaroo is unmerited. In a September 2016 email correspondence, W.D. Richter said, "It's a misconception that Doc Savage was an influence. Too tight-ass."

Rocket Men and Caped Crusaders

Where the pulps go, can full-on science fiction and superheroes be far behind?

Popular sci-fi serials included *Flash Gordon* (1936), *Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars* (1938), *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* (1940) and, in between those last two, *Buck Rogers* (1939), with Buck being played by the same man who also starred as Flash, Buster Crabbe. Crabbe was one of the many serial Tarzans in 1933 as well.

Brick Bradford (1947) was based on a newspaper strip which had begun in 1933. Brick's adventures grew progressively more fantastical over the years, moving beyond simple adventures and into the realms of lost worlds, mad scientists, and outright space opera. This tone is reflected in the serial, which includes death rays, travel to the moon via the fifth dimension, and a time machine similar to the one featured semi-regularly in the



newspaper strips. Hmm – you know, *The Adventures of Brick Bradford Across the Fifth Dimension* wouldn't have made a bad title.

The serials were quick to borrow characters from the newspaper strips. In addition to Brick Bradford and Flash Gordon, there were costumed adventurers like the jungle-based hero the Phantom (1943), and law-and-order crimebusters like Dick Tracy and Secret Agent X-9, each of whom inspired multiple serials starting in 1937. When comic books stumbled onto what became the modern concept of the superhero, beginning in 1938 with Superman, serials soon adapted again and embraced the new trend.

Today, live-action superhero movies featuring characters licensed from comic books are commonplace. But it all began in the serials with *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (1941), *Spy Smasher* (1942), *Batman* (1943), *Captain America* (1944), *Superman* (1948), *Batman and Robin* (1949), and *Atom Man vs. Superman* (1950). Non-superhero comic book characters were featured as well, such as the masked modern cowboy known as *The Vigilante* (1947), jungle explorer *Congo Bill* (1948) and flying aces *Hop Harrigan* (1946) and *Blackhawk* (1952).



Not all comic book serials were as faithful to their source material as fans have come to expect from their modern counterparts. As we all know, Captain America is really a ~~soldier~~ district attorney named Steve Rogers Grant Gardner who carries a ~~special shield~~ ordinary handgun. But perhaps such loose adaptations were necessary growing pains on the road to the higher standards most comic book movies are held to today.

Go West, Young Serials

Throughout the entire span of the serials era, Westerns were enduringly popular. Some continued the practice of presenting characters who had originated in other media, such as radio's *The Lone Ranger* (1938) and *The Lone Ranger Rides Again* (1939). Zorro, the black-clad crusader of Old California, had his roots in *All-Story* like Tarzan, and like the lord of the jungle he provided inspiration for several serials: *Zorro Rides Again* (1937), *Zorro's Fighting Legion* (1939), *Zorro's Black Whip* (1944), *Son of Zorro* (1947), and *Ghost of Zorro* (1949).

Other Western serials looked to historic figures, like *Jesse James Rides Again* (1947) and *The Adventures of Frank and Jesse James* (1948), with the famous outlaw being portrayed by Clayton Moore – best known for later playing the Lone Ranger on television and film, but not in the earlier serials. Incidentally, Moore was also the eponymous *Ghost of Zorro* and would go on to appear in a popular sci-fi serial, *Radar Men from the Moon*.

Buck Jones was an established Western actor going back to the silent era, but his career had begun to sag until revitalized by the serials. Among his serial work was *Gordon of Ghost City* (1933), *The Red Rider* (1934), *The Roaring West* (1935), *White Eagle* (1941, a remake his own feature-length 1932 film), *The Phantom Rider* (1936), and *Riders of Death Valley* (1941).

The Singing Cowboy of Radio Ranch

Serials also boosted the stardom of Gene Autry, one of the most enduring of the singing cowboys. He'd already carved out a reputation via records and radio by the time he began to get into movies. In only his third screen appearance, he was elevated to the starring role in the undeniably odd yet strangely appealing serial *The Phantom Empire* (1935).

The Phantom Empire was a mash-up of many genres: Western on the surface, but with a prominent dose of sci-fi, plus a little crime/mystery/action and a few musical interludes thrown in for good measure. Autry plays himself, a popular singing cowboy who hosts a daily broadcast from Radio Ranch. The ranch happens to be near the hidden entrance to an underground city populated by a technologically advanced forgotten culture. Throw in a crooked group of radium prospectors and you're in for twelve chapters and 240+ minutes of one of the strangest adventures you'll ever witness. Mysterious horsemen in helmets and capes! Fistfights and shootouts! Gene Autry framed for murder! A literal cliffhanger when our heroes cling to a canyon wall! Robots! An imperious queen! The "Z-Ray Lithium Gun," capable of rendering a man blind! And all of it put on hold several times when Gene has to drop whatever feat of derring-do he's just completed and rush back to the ranch in the nick of time for his daily broadcast, lest he be in breach of contract!

Much of the action is carried by Gene's teenage sidekicks, brother and sister Frankie and Betsy Baxter (played by Frankie Darro and Betsy King Ross). Frankie is an aspiring young scientist with his own surprisingly well equipped laboratory hidden in the loft of a barn. Frankie and Betsy are also at the core of the Junior Thunder Riders Club, a youth organization they formed which takes its name from the mysterious masked horsemen they caught a glimpse of – riders in such numbers that their galloping horses create a sound like thunder. Where could these bizarre riders have come from or disappeared to? Maybe the answer has something to do with the strange radio interference Frankie has detected that seems to come from below the ground...

Many small points of similarity exist between *The Phantom Empire* and *Buckaroo Banzai*. The Junior Thunder Riders serve a function similar to the Blue Blaze Irregulars. Gene's cowboy pals Pete and Oscar are his equivalent of a couple of Hong Kong Cavaliers: back-up singers, occasional comic relief, and ready to wade into danger when necessary. Buckaroo's performance of "Since I Don't Have You" harkens back to the many times Autry sings as part of his show-within-the-show radio broadcasts.

The Phantom Empire was later redistributed under the alternate title *Radio Ranch*. Like *Buckaroo Banzai*, it's a glorious, crazy mess, and is highly recommended. But be aware that many

versions have been extremely trimmed down, cutting out more than half its original content in favor of what is considered a more manageable running time.

End of an Era

By the 1950s, the demand for serials was beginning to peter out. A few were still being produced, but they were often even more slapdash and half-hearted than usual.

Sci-fi serials rallied for a few last hurrahs. In 1949, Republic Pictures rolled out *King of the Rocket Men*, then later took the same basic gimmick and modified the title character into Commando Cody in *Radar Men from the Moon* (1952). Cody almost donned his jetpack again later that year for *Zombies of the Stratosphere*, but the script was rewritten at the last minute to feature a different lead even though some of the sets, props, and even other actors from *Radar Men* were still reused.

(Incidentally, *Zombies* also presented us with a young Leonard Nimoy in his first screen role.) Cody finally received a follow-up of his own in *Commando Cody: Sky Marshal of the Universe* (1953).

But by then the writing was on the wall. Those studios which hadn't already gotten out of the serials game began to phase them out. Despite being distributed as a serial, *Commando Cody* had originally been planned as a television series, ending up in theaters instead as fallout from a contractual dispute. Within a few more years, the last serial released by any of the major studios hit screens: one final Western, Columbia's *Blazing the Overland Trail* (1956). Old serials continued to recirculate for a while, but the attraction was wearing thin.

Serials Seep into Television

In 1965, the 1943 *Batman* serial was given a theatrical re-release as *An Evening with Batman and Robin*, aimed at college crowds and slanted towards eliciting laughs based on its outdatedness. Although the timing was coincidental, this helped ABC roll out their Adam West *Batman* TV show (1966-68), which was already in development. The show also took a cue from the serials for its format, airing twice a week for most of its run and pausing between episodes on a cliffhanger: "Tune in tomorrow – same Bat-time, same Bat-channel!"

Around that same time, *The Perils of Pauline* was remade yet again in 1967, now with a deliberately campy tone inspired by the success of *Batman*. Intended as a movie-length TV pilot, it failed to find a network and was released as a theatrical feature. Eventually it came full circle, re-edited by slicing it up into "chapters" packaged on separate Super 8 reels sold to consumers who wanted to bring a more serial-like feeling to the home viewing experience.

In 1979, NBC experimented with a series called *Cliffhangers*, a revival of the serial format on television. Each hour-long episode presented a twenty-minute chapter of three separate ongoing stories: "Stop Susan Williams," about a reporter

unraveling an international conspiracy; "The Curse of Dracula," in which the famous vampire grows weary of immortality and would trade it for love; and "The Secret Empire," a Western/sci-fi mash-up heavily inspired by *The Phantom Empire*, about a U.S. Marshal who discovers aliens living in an underground city.

The series was intended as a showcase of backdoor pilots, with the hopes that any or all of the segments might prove popular enough to spin off into series of their own. Instead, *Cliffhangers* fell over the edge and was canceled after ten episodes. Only the Dracula storyline reached its final chapter during the original run. The Susan Williams story received closure later that year when it was re-edited into a TV movie called *The Girl Who Saved the World*. But fans of *The Secret Empire* were mostly out of luck. A final episode containing its last two chapters aired only overseas.

Years later, the idea of incorporating serial elements into a TV series still had supporters. In a 2004 interview, W.D. Richter discussed how he and Earl Mac Rauch might have handled a Buckaroo Banzai TV show if given the chance:

"Actually, what Mac and I really wanted to do on television was a country-western-rock 'n' roll-sci-fi variety show. Each episode would feature a ten-minute serialized chapter of a new on-going adventure as well as edgy contemporary music acts and provocative thinkers and doers from all fields sitting on a couch next to Reno chatting up the madness and excitement in the world outside the studio. Ever see the old Gene Autry serial *Radio Ranch*?"

As revealed elsewhere in this very issue, as early as 1973, Mac's formative ideas of Buckaroo were already being envisioned as "interlocked, episodic motion-picture adventures" – in other words, serial-like – and the 1981 pitch sessions emphasized how a serial-like structure suited the character. W.D. Richter went on to say in a September 2016 email, "Buckaroo was certainly conceived of as a series of episodes from the get-go, not necessarily short cliffhangers, but individual episodes that, like the movie, leave dangling the unresolved narrative threats of villains like Xan and the World Crime league. My best analogy is Moriarty in the Holmes's adventure or, in our time, the unresolved conflict with Darth Vader in that space movie serial. *The Phantom Empire*, discovered by us after Mac had begun writing, was a wonderful, inspiring mix of horses and cars!"

Buck Jones, Buck Rogers, Brick Bradford, and the heroes of Radio Ranch. If Buckaroo had been around in those days, he'd have fit right in among the serials. And if serials were still around in 1984 – or today – they might be a good fit for Buckaroo as well.



MonkeyBoyBoox? Tell me more...

INTERVIEW: W.D. Richter

By Steve Mattsson

In 2015 W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch launched their digital publishing house, MonkeyBoyBoox®. Their initial offering was Richter's Don't, the first volume in a futuristic biography about the 49th President of the United States. Don't is available as an eBook on Amazon.com. You can download a free sample or get all 143 pages for \$3.99.

There are also exciting rumors that Mac Rauch may be releasing new Buckaroo Banzai prose through the publisher. Rumbblings persist that a novel may be nearing completion. Get the latest news from the MonkeyBoyBoox Facebook page. In the meantime, Steve Mattsson asks W.D. Richter about the project.

Steve Mattsson: MonkeyBoyBoox uses a phonetic spelling similar to the Red Lectroid signage at Yoyodyne Propulsion Systems. Did you know there is a charming little bookstore in Spokane, WA called Monkeyboy Books?

W.D. Richter: I did, yes, but I saw that they misspelled “boox”, so I figured it was okay if we used the name with the correct spelling.

SM: Boox's first release is Don't or Don't Even Think About It. My question is, what if I did think about “it”? What would the consequences be?

WDR: You'd climb a giant redwood and probably get eaten by monsters. Don't even think about it.

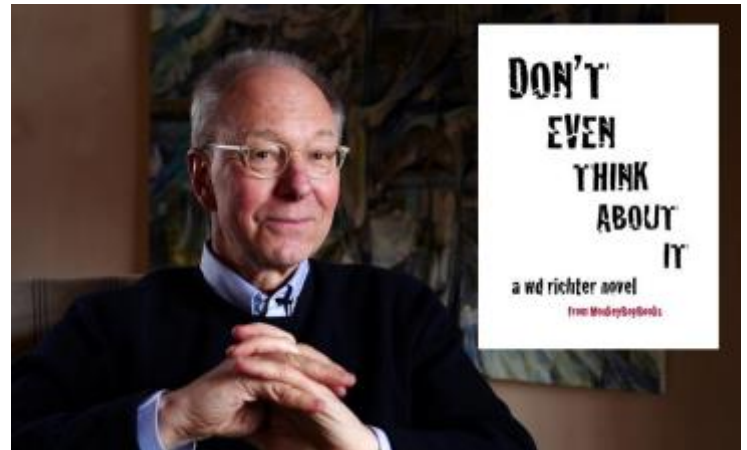
SM: The protagonist for Don't is an adventurous lad called Buckminster Break. His first name could be shortened to “Buck” and his last name starts with the letter “B”. Care to explain yourself?

WDR: Look, there are only 24 letters in the alphabet, the last time I looked, so there are bound to be some overlaps when a writer, after a long career, is still trying to make names up out of thin air.

SM: I think there's 26 now. We added Alaska and Hawaii in 1959. Don't uses very descriptive language to create interesting visuals in the reader's mind. You have primarily written for film which is a visual medium. Did Don't start as a screenplay?

WDR: It did! And it almost got made, but then it didn't. But I liked it, anyway, so I thought it would be fun to write a novel based upon it. There was no length constraint hanging over the book, and I took that as license to, for better or worse, expand the story just a bit and use extensive descriptive language without feeling I was stepping on a potential director's toes.

SM: I want people to think I'm smart, but I can't figure out if the conflict in Don't is “man vs. nature” or “man vs. self?”. Could you reassure me enough that I'll have the confidence I need to move on to the next question?



WDR: I haven't looked at the next question yet because that might prejudice my answer, but when asked a thorny thematic question like this, I often quote Yeats:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

SM: No W.B. Yeats, but Henry David Thoreau and Herman Hesse are quoted within the first four chapters of Don't. It also contains the sentence, “Then that gross bug thing the suckers belong to okay it starts to ooze something awful which is this SNOT ROPE from an opening in its ‘head?’” Who is your target audience for this story? I want to party with them!

WDR: Young Republicans.

SM: Good call. They have the kind of disposable income needed to purchase eBooks. Thomas R. Dibdin, Jr., National Park Service Ranger, is more attuned to nature than the other characters. He is also less stressed. Are we going to miss nature when it's gone?

WDR: Some people won't notice is my guess. Since Don't aspires to being taken seriously as literature, let me quote another wise author, W. Allen, in response. “As the poet said, ‘Only God can make a tree’ – probably because it's so hard to figure out how to get the bark on.” The question then becomes “Are we going to miss God when He's gone because almost everybody will notice that the trees no longer have bark and start to realize, ‘Boy, I really liked bark?’”

SM: I don't really care if Sky Knife is the antagonist or the setting of the story, but I need to know if it is a reliable narrator.

WDR: An excellent question. I feel the answer is “yes”, but the words come to us through Ranger Tom who may not be the sharpest “knife” in the drawer. And yet he has a deep and



Reliable narrator or stick in the mud? Sky Knife, the tree that looms large in W.D. Richter's novel Don't may be both. Photographer unknown.

genuine relationship with the forest. All in all, I think that if Sky Knife were to talk directly to me, I'd discover that Tom got the gist of it and even some of the poetry in that magnificent redwood.

SM: The forest in Don't coordinates a defense to fend off an attack by teenagers. There are articles on the web about how trees use an "internet of fungus" to communicate with each other. I don't really have a question, I just wanted to type "internet of fungus".

WDR: And you did, flawlessly. What's this "internet" you refer to? Since you admit that you had a non-question, I'll give you the following non-answer: Years ago, I found a copy of the attached ridiculously long article* in a municipal trash can and discovered Cleve Backster.

SM: If Don't became a movie, who would you like to see cast as Bucky Break and Libby Nickels?

WDR: Well, I just "don't" know. I think open auditions would be the way to go.

SM: Don't tells us that Bucky Break will become the 49th President of the United States of America, but that doesn't happen in this story. Is it your experience that the audience can be trusted to fill in the blanks when a larger story is implied?

WDR: Certainly not. I've already finished the second installment in Bucky's life story, again based on an original script I wrote a few years back. This book edges Bucky closer to The Oval Office. It's called *Man Without A Planet*, and it's an eBook that's available nowhere yet because I'm letting demand build. By the way, did you realize that nowadays almost anybody

can wind up being the President of the United States? No, it's true.

SM: Maybe you could meet the audience halfway. Got any more Bucky Break adventures that'll help us get from the top of Sky Knife to the Oval Office?

WDR: What, you didn't read my answer above?

SM: Nope. This interview is not happening in real time. In a previous newsletter you mentioned an unproduced screenplay called *Man Without A Planet*. Did the Man Without A Planet eBook start as a screenplay?

WDR: Look, if you're not even going to read my answers, why ask the questions?

SM: I'm a work in progress. Let me know if I do it again. When might Man Without A Planet be available to the masses?

WDR: When I relearn how to publish an eBook. Have you ever tried to do that? BookBaby's a great way to go, but it's still a devilish procedure and uses that internet thing you mentioned earlier.

SM: Are you going to focus on Bucky Break stories for the time being or do you have other plans for MonkeyBoyBoox?

WDR: Mac and I definitely have other plans. The best-laid kind. There's a good chance they might involve new Buckaroo adventures from Mac's pen.

SM: Can we look forward to any Earl Mac Rauch stories from Boox?

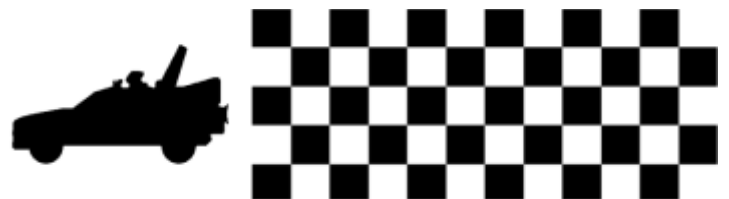
WDR: You're doing it again.

SM: Thanks. I understand Mac has written pages and pages of Buckaroo Banzai fiction that has never been published. Might we see some of that from MonkeyBoyBoox?

WDR: Sure. *The Strange Case Of Mister Cigars* is a favorite of mine, but it's up to Mac.

SM: What can the audience who enjoys the writing of W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch do to get more of it?

WDR: Be patient. Mac's a rancher, and I'm a farmer. Duty calls. Horses and chickens can't tell a Sunday from a Thursday.



*Grover Cleveland "Cleve" Backster, Jr. was an interrogation specialist for the CIA, best known for his experiments with plants using a polygraph, which led to his theory that plants have ESP. His theory was widely reported in the media but was rejected by scientists. The full text of the article can be found on-line at [The New Yorker magazine](#).

INTERVIEW: Lewis “Perfect Tommy” Smith

By Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson

Lewis Smith is an actor who was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is best known to the general public for his role as Charles Main in the *North and South* mini-series trilogy, but readers of this newsletter know him best as Buckaroo’s mysterious right hand man, Perfect Tommy. Smith currently teaches acting in Santa Monica, California. Steve Mattsson caught up with Lewis by telephone this August.

Steve Mattsson: Lewis, a lot of people want to act, but not a lot of people get to study with Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner. How did you make that happen?

Lewis Smith: My father taught me something very important in life. His business was rescuing failed hotels and he would go to the bank and ask for the owner. If they said he wasn’t in, they would ask, “Would he like to speak to the manager?” He wouldn’t take the meeting. He would only meet with the top people. So that’s always been my method—go for the best people and don’t be shy about it. Listening to my Dad paid off in dividends.

SM: Any examples?

LS: I walked into the Strasberg Academy and asked for Mr. Strasberg. I asked with such conviction that they said he’s upstairs. At each floor they directed me up until I got to his personal secretary. She asked what time I had an appointment and I said I don’t have an appointment; I just want to meet him. She burst out laughing. She was from the south too, and she said, “Honey, you don’t know where you are, do you?” But then she said, “Meet me for lunch and I’ll help you out.”

SM: Fortune favors the bold.

LS: Yes. All I knew is that I wanted to work with the people who had trained Brando, De Niro, and Hoffman. Robert Duval came out of Misner. So, I just went for their teachers.

SM: Were you studying with them all at once or was it sequential?

LS: Strasberg and Adler happened to be just a mile apart in Hollywood. I got very, very lucky. This was in 1977 when they had their original studios and they vehemently disliked each other.

SM: Oh?

LS: They used to talk shit about each other all the time. Adler called Strasberg a fraud when she came back from Paris after studying with Stanislavski. It was on after that and it’s been on ever since. So I couldn’t tell one studio that I was studying at the other. I studied at Strasberg and Adler at the same time for about two and a half years. It was hardcore training and for the first year I didn’t know if I was going to make it.

SM: Did you ever accidentally use an Adler technique in a Strasberg class?



LS: Yes. I used the wrong language and they knew immediately that it came from Adler. I used the word “storyteller” and that was Adler’s focus. Strasberg emphasized characterization. Adler’s philosophy was that we told stories, not like that Strasberg outfit down the street who stressed characterization above all.

SM: What happened?

LS: They said, “Where’d you get that word, ‘storyteller’?” I said, “Oh, uh...I was reading a book.” (Laughter) “That Adler book?” I said, “Yeah, that’s the one!” and they said, “Throw it away.” (Laughter)

SM: I understand the philosophy of wanting to work with the best, but there must have been a lot of competition for a spot in those classes. How’d you close the deal?

LS: I paid my dues. To get to Strasberg, I needed to take a lot of preliminary classes. Most actors try to avoid this step, but I embraced it. I signed up for them all at once and went to the studio every day, instead of a couple of times a month. Go hard and fast.

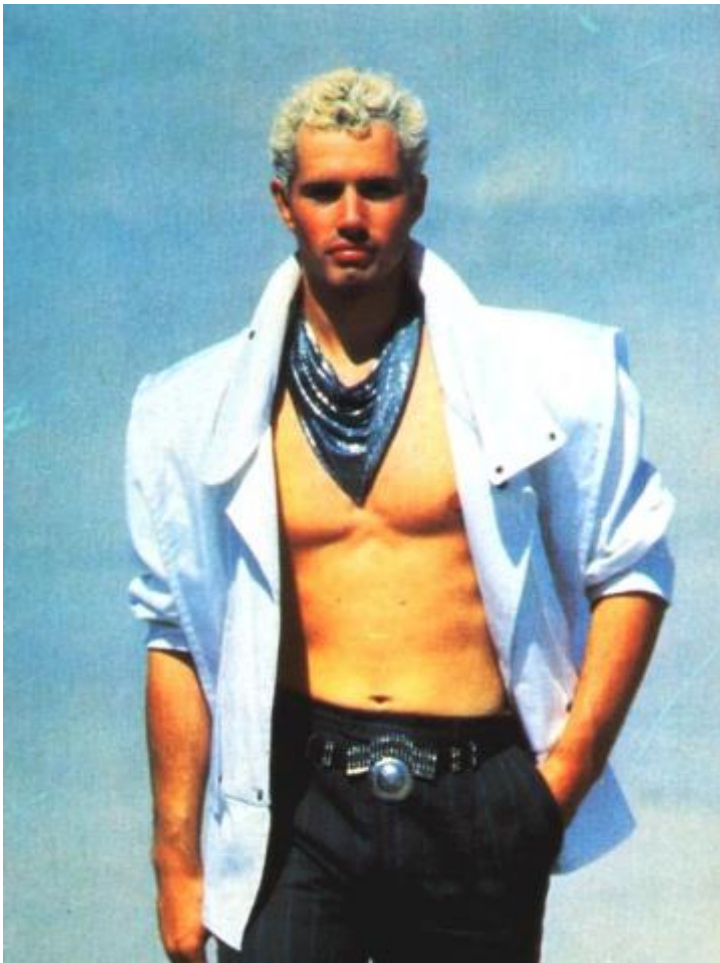
SM: *The Final Terror* was your first film role. The cast included Adrian Zmed, Joe Pantoliano, Rachel Ward, Daryl Hanna, and you. Sounds pretty good, should I watch it on Blu-ray?

LS: Hell, yes! Phenomenal cast. And the director, Andrew Davis, you didn’t mention him! He went on to be one of the biggest action directors in our industry. He did *The Fugitive* with Harrison Ford. *The Final Terror* was my first role, but the process wasn’t easy. The casting people were behind me. They’d seen me in a showcase and were fighting for me. The producer didn’t want me, but the director did. The producer Joe Roth, who went on to be an executive in the industry with 20th Century Fox and Walt Disney Studios, was friends with Adrian Zmed’s family and wanted to give the part to him. So what ended up happening was they wrote another role for Adrian.

SM: They found a way for both kids to stay in the picture.

LS: Exactly. That's the way movies get made. It's very political. I had to wait for a few months during this process before I knew I had the part. The waiting was hellish. I teach now and one of my lessons is "acting is easy, hanging in there is hell." Hanging in there is the most important skill you can have in this industry; hanging in there during the auditioning process, hanging in with your career.

SM: Walter Hill has said of *Southern Comfort*, "I was very proud of the actors in it. It was a tough movie to make, and they put up with a lot. They would probably tell you they put up with a lot from me." What's Hill talking about?



Idol Moments: Though the clothes often make the man, clearly it's the hair that makes Perfect Tommy, along with some serious transformational acting by a young Lewis Smith.

LS: Oh, that motherfucker! He yelled all the fuckin' time! He was like John Huston with a cigar, and he would go, "Damn it, Smith! Hold your gun like a man or I'll take it away from ya!" And he'd do it with a bullhorn in front of 150 people. He was on my ass for the whole movie 'cause I was a rookie. The technical part of the job was new to me and it's difficult to hit your mark wading through a swamp. Working with Walter Hill is like having General Patton as your director. He's tough, but you know he loves you. It turned out to be a wonderful experience; because it was a crash course in professionalism. He

was tougher on me than anyone, for sure. He took a big risk with me and wanted me to succeed.

SM: What do you mean?

LS: It's funny how I got the job. I coached a friend of mine for the role and then submitted my headshot behind his back.

SM: So you got a head start on preparing for your audition?

LS: Yeah, that's how ruthless we are. I'm not gonna tell you his name because he's pretty famous today. He was just getting started then—I'll give you a clue; he was in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and *Beverly Hills Cop*...

SM: It's tough to "judge" who you're talking about with only two clues.

LS: (Laughter) We were good friends until he found out I got a call back for the role he had auditioned for. I knew how I wanted to play the part, but the other guys in the waiting room had huge resumes. It's David Keith and a couple of others who I'm fighting against. I decided I needed to take a huge risk. I put dirt in my teeth and walked in there with the craziest hillbilly accent, "Howdy, boys! How you all doin'?" I remember they stared at me with awe and fear. Then I grabbed the casting lady, which is a huge no-no. You don't touch anybody, but I put my claws into her and scared the shit out of her. She looked at me with rage and I started cackling, "Ha ha, I got ya!" Later, I got a phone call from my agent and she goes, "Lewis, what the hell went on in that room? They want to hire you, but they're scared to death of you. Walter Hill wants to meet you for lunch, but he doesn't know if you were acting or not." I met with Walter Hill and he was happy to find out that I wasn't like the man in that room.

SM: How did you prepare for your role as Perfect Tommy in *Buckaroo Banzai*? What does it take to be "perfect"?

LS: Unadulterated fear. Fear of embarrassing yourself. Fear of embarrassing the people who hired you. Thank god I had four months before we had to put it on camera. We started with the hair and that went horribly wrong, which made things even worse. I had scabs on my eyebrows from a bad bleach job. I thought, "How am I gonna fix this? Should I tell them?" It took two months to straighten that out. I started going to night clubs because Billy Idol was in. I got my courage up and I danced like Billy Idol. He was really my role model for Perfect Tommy—his audacity, his smoldering intensity. I thought I could hook into that attitude. You can't just walk onto a set and pull off that kind of transformational stuff. You've got to live it.

SM: You lived the hair's lifestyle.

LS: (Laughter) I lived it night and day and finally started to find myself in Perfect Tommy. You can't just put on a wardrobe and costume—you've got to relate it to yourself.

SM: I understand you were roommates with Garry Shandling during the time you were prepping for and filming *Buckaroo Banzai*, back before he started to get attention for his stand-up.

LS: Yeah, for ten years we were best friends. We met each other when nobody would hire either of us. He was writing for *Welcome Back Kotter*, but nobody would pay him as a stand-up. I was at the [Comedy Store](#) with him when the owner Mitzi Shore, who is very famous, told him to his face that he would never be a comedian. It took him a while to recover from that, because that's a pretty powerful person to tell you that you shouldn't even try. And I was in a very similar position as an actor. We became friends and supported each other. I don't think I would have made it without his help. He probably would have, but it might have taken him longer than it did. Eventually we both started to work. It was very rewarding for both of us to see each other start to make headway in the industry.

SM: Tell us about what it was like hanging out in your place when you two were between gigs.

LS: It's not as interesting as you might think. (Laughter) Unfortunately there weren't any chicks. There wasn't anything like that going on. For the most part it was just him and me. Neither one of us had the juice to attract that kind of thing. What we did was we worked our asses off. He would make me watch all these damn comedy tapes, all the geniuses Pryor, Cosby, and George Carlin. We'd watch them together and break them down, talk about ideas. Then he'd watch old movies with me—Redford and Paul Newman and help me analyze them. It wasn't glamorous, because behind the scenes we were working on getting better.

SM: I hear that Garry helped tweak some of Perfect Tommy's lines. What was that process like?

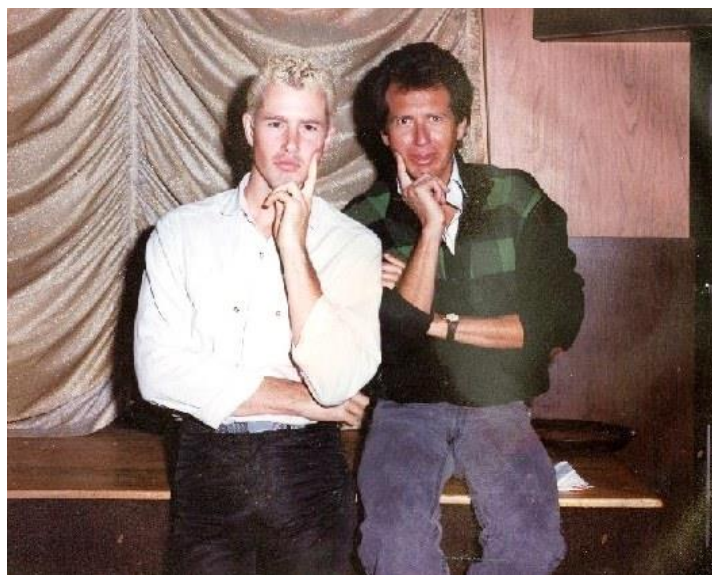
LS: Well, Mac does not need any tweaking. It would be inaccurate to say that the script needed any help. But, we found out pretty early that Rick was allowing some freedom within the lines and with that freedom came responsibility. Nobody was doing any improvisation—adding complete sentences, but we were allowed to ad lib—adding two to three words. Like my line when Buckaroo is going into battle, instead of saying, "Good luck", I said, "Don't embarrass us."

RK: "Have I ever?"

LS: (Laughter) If you notice there are three words in that line—an ad lib. Garry, as a comedian, had taught me the preciousness of words—each one is important. So once we got going with the filming, I would show him my scenes and we would brainstorm various possibilities depending on the circumstances. If that happens, I could say this. A few of those found their way into the movie. Later he came to the set a few times and whispered in my ear, "Why don't you try this..." But I don't want to give the impression that that Mac's script needed punching up.

SM: Right, but if Garry Shandling is making suggestions, you should probably listen.

LS: (Laughter) It doesn't hurt! I'm sure that's why some of 'em made it in. Rick knew where they were coming from. And



Blue Blaze Irregular Garry Shandling? It's true. Shandling and Smith were roommates throughout the filming of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Shandling provided Smith with commentary and support as the two tackled the early portions of their careers together.

Garry understood how good the script was, because he was a writer and he respected Mac.

SM: How much of Perfect Tommy's backstory did you need to know before you were comfortable playing the role?

LS: Everything. Rick and Mac helped a little, but they wanted people to invent and see what they came up with.

SM: I found this from the character profile section of the *Buckaroo* DVD: "Perfect Tommy is of Scottish decent and is related on his mother's side to Lord Brougham and the historian Roberston."

LS: Yes, that aristocratic background helped with the Perfect Tommy's walk, everybody talks about his walk, his shoulders...

SM: I'd call it a strut, Lewis.

LS: (Laughter) I don't know if he was conscious of it, but that regal background would be in his DNA and would affect the way he carried himself. It was a combination of a model's runway walk and a king's promenade. I was trying for an emperor's physicality with Perfect Tommy.

SM: The *Buckaroo Banzai* comic books imply that Perfect Tommy is bisexual. Did you give any thought to his sexual orientation during filming?

LS: Yes! Well, at that time the androgynous thing was going on and who could tell what anybody was? And that ties in with *Buckaroo*; you never know what things are. It was left to the audience.

SM: So this was something you gave thought to when preparing for the role.

LS: Absolutely, that's why I wore the blue eye-liner, 'cause I wanted to give a subtle hint that maybe there is something

going on. (Laughter) I mean, what type of man wears blue eyeliner?

SM: Well, you pulled it off, or Perfect Tommy pulled it off—one of you made it work! (Laughter)

LS: There are many seeds that you plant, but it takes months to pull off a character like this. It's called transformational acting, Daniel Day Lewis or Sean Penn-type stuff. It takes months of layering and trial and error versus a movie star like Cary Grant, where it's more personality driven.

SM: Where he's basically playing himself.

LS: Yeah, but Perfect Tommy and the character in *Southern Comfort* are transformational acting-type situations, because I'm not like those guys. That's where the training from Stasberg and Adler was essential to pull off those types of characterizations.

SM: *Buckaroo Banzai* had an incredible cast. What did you learn as a young actor from being on that set?

LS: To fight for your life. You can't ask for anything, you need to take it.

SM: So even though your character was one of the alphas, you had to compete with all those alpha actors in that cast to make sure you got the mark with the best light or...

LS: Oh yeah. Especially with someone like Peter and that's not meant to be derogatory. He's an alpha actor playing an alpha character and fighting for the same stuff you are. He wouldn't be doing his job if he didn't, so I learned to just go out there and take things.

SM: Of all the Hong Kong Cavaliers, it seemed like Perfect Tommy was the only one trying to compete with Buckaroo.

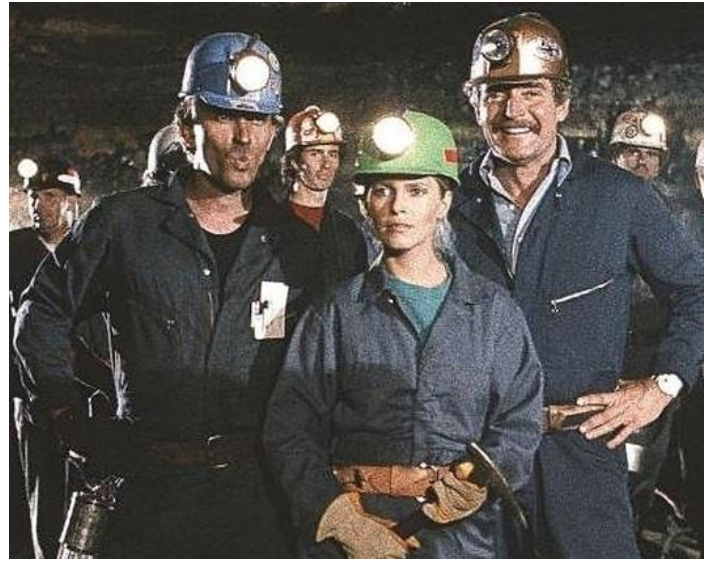
LS: Most of that was character stuff from the script, but some of it... Did you know that Peter and I did a TV movie the year before that?

SM: No, I did not!

LS: Peter had concerns about casting me in *Buckaroo Banzai*. We had been in a Cheryl Ladd movie called *Kentucky Woman*. I played the bad guy. My character was a loose cannon and I was a loose cannon on the set. I was ad libbing all over the place. As a young actor I was fighting for my life and I was making mistakes and stepping on his lines. My character was aggressive, so I was trying to be aggressive and stand out. I'm sure I aggravated him.

SM: Then you were both cast in *Buckaroo*.

LS: It was Peter's worst nightmare! When Rick found out there was a problem, he said, "Lewis, why didn't you tell me about you and Peter?" Then Rick said, "We're going to need to meet. Peter has concerns." So Rick set up a lunch meeting for the three of us and he then backed out at the last minute, saying, "I think you and Peter should work this out yourselves." (Laughter). Now Peter and I are sitting face-to-face at Morton's,



Second time is the charm: It turns out that *Buckaroo Banzai* wasn't the first time that Peter Weller (front left) and Lewis Smith (rear center, directly above Weller's shoulder) worked together in film, as seen in this photo from the 1983 made-for-TV movie *Kentucky Woman*.

a really famous restaurant, and we hashed it out. Peter was direct and said, "I just don't want you coming after me like you did in the last film." And he was right I was like a young prize fighter who's a little wild, but I wouldn't have changed anything. That's how I learn.

SM: Rick tells a story about when Buckaroo bails Penny out of jail and how you weren't originally in that scene.

LS: I wasn't! I couldn't believe that Rick let me be in it! Peter had concerns about me being a third wheel in his big scene with Ellen Barkin, but to his credit he eventually bought into what Rick was trying to do. A reoccurring theme in *Buckaroo Banzai* is making fun of movie clichés, so we couldn't have a serious love scene. We thought having a bored third wheel tag along on the "first date" was consistent with the rest of the film. My banging my head on the bars of the jail cell, only in a movie like *Buckaroo Banzai* is that gonna happen in the love scene.

SM: Your interactions with Peter in that scene were very natural.

LS: Yes, that's where he started to trust me as a scene partner again. Because I was added to that scene, none of that dialogue was in the script.

SM: "...and give her your coat." "Why me?"

LS: "Because you're perfect." Yeah, in this movie I always gave Peter the last word, because he was Buckaroo and I was his ally. In *Kentucky Woman* we were adversaries and I tried to get the last word, which increased the tension. In this film it was the right thing to give him the last word from an actor's and character's point-of-view.

SM: How long did you keep the hair after filming wrapped?

LS: I had to bleach it back six months later to film the Team Banzai March scene for the end credits.

SM: Did you keep clubbing as long as you had the blond hair?

LS: Oh, yeah! I had too. It was very effective with the girls. (Laughter)

SM: Clancy Brown said in a recent podcast that he missed you at the San Diego Comic Con and that he owes you a phone call. Do you keep in touch with the cast? (Listen to it here at podbay.fm.)

LS: Yes, I called Clancy a couple of times trying to get him to come. Clancy and Mac are both very shy and it's difficult to get them out. Clancy's a very private, soft spoken guy and so is Mac. That was really a great cast. Rick did a masterful job putting everyone together.

SM: You recently started appearing as a guest at comic book conventions. What have your interactions with the Team Banzai fans been like?

LS: It's been insane. I didn't realize the impact of the movie on the fans. You can see it in their eyes, how much the movie meant to them. I heard stories of parents bonding with their children when they watched the movie together, of couples who met because of the movie. Someone said they felt odd in the world until they saw *Buckaroo Banzai*. It takes us back to the importance of storytelling. We've been doing it for thousands of years around the campfire. Storytelling is a tool and it's how we pass things from one generation to the next.

SM: If *Buckaroo Banzai* was re-booted for modern audiences, what type of role would you like to play?

LS: I'd like to play a bad guy. I'd love to see Perfect Tommy have a Darth Vader-like arc. Perfect Tommy's father could be interesting, too.

SM: Since you've been teaching acting, what is more satisfying; giving a great performance or seeing one of your students give a great performance?

LS: Both! That's like asking which one of your children is your favorite. There's joy in both.

SM: There is lots of competition for acting coaches and classes in LA. Why should a student choose your Actors Academy?

LS: There are still acting coaches around who studied directly with Strasberg, Adler, or Meisner, but few worked with all three and none have my resume. I can teach you the foundational stuff that comes from working with them and give the practical advice that comes from my personal experience.

SM: And right on cue, here's a link to the Actors Academy's website: <http://www.actors-academy.com/index-main.htm>

LS: Thanks!

SM: *Buckaroo Banzai* debuted 32 years ago, but it's still generating buzz. How did that movie burrow itself so deeply into the zeitgeist?

LS: The fans wouldn't let it die. In the pre-internet days they shared it with each other and kept it alive until the rest of the world caught up with it. It was a movie ahead of its time.

Be sure to check out the Buckaroo Banzai-Lewis Smith [Facebook page](#) for all the latest info on his future convention appearances 🐉

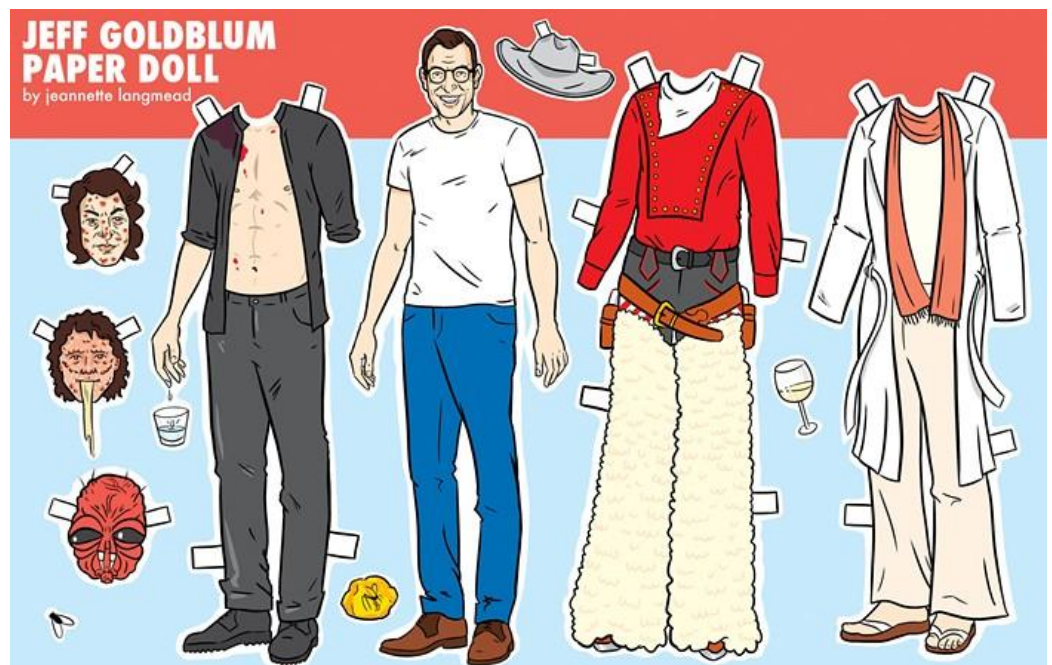
BLUMING AWESOME

Ideally, the whole cast of *Buckaroo Banzai* would have been interviewed for this issue. It was not to be. We lead an imperfect existence in Perfect Tommy's world.

Never fear! [The Portland Mercury](#) offers you the opportunity to conduct your very own interview with this lifelike Jeff Goldblum paper doll. The doll comes with a New Jersey get-up so you can create new *Banzai* adventures afterwards in the comfort of your own home.

Click [here](#) for your printable pdf of the Jeff Goldblum paper doll.

Click [here](#) for additional Goldblum goodness, courtesy of *The Portland Mercury*.



Ten Places to Spot Seven Banzai Alumni

By Scott Tate

Look, or rather listen, for **Peter Weller** contributing his voice to the role of Brujt in *Yamasong: March of the Hollows*. The film is described by Dark Dunes Productions as being “in the epic puppet storytelling tradition of *Dark Crystal* with a strong dose of Studio Ghibli’s *Princess Mononoke*.” It’s reportedly in post-production and released a trailer earlier this year but doesn’t have a scheduled release.

John Lithgow returns to the realm of sitcoms in *Trial and Error* as Larry Henderson, an eccentric small town poetry professor accused of killing his wife (It’s a comedy, honest!). The upcoming series will be new for NBC’s 2016-2017 season. With no premiere date announced yet, it will likely be held back for a replacement slot or mid-season debut. History buffs can find Lithgow in a more serious capacity as Winston Churchill in the four episode UK series *The Crown*, premiering in November.

Jeff Goldblum will join the Marvel Cinematic Universe in next year’s *Thor: Ragnarok*, where he’ll be portraying the Grandmaster, a cosmic elder whom Goldblum describes as “a hedonist, a pleasure-seeker, an enjoyer of life and tastes and smells.”

Christopher Lloyd is one of the stars of *I Am Not a Serial Killer*. Based on the 2009 novel by Dan Wells, it’s the story of a sociopathic teenager who resists his own homicidal urges, but complications arise when mysterious deaths begin to occur in his town. Lloyd plays Mr. Crowley, the teen’s suspicious neighbor. The film recently had a coordinated release of limited theatrical distribution, DVD, and video on demand, all available as of August 26th.

Next year, look for **Clancy Brown** portraying the father of Boston Marathon bombing survivor Jeff Bauman in the film *Stronger*, based on Bauman’s book of the same name. He’ll also be in 2017’s *Supercon*, a heist comedy about actors and comic book artists who target an unfair convention promoter. And although it’s still a while away, fans will be happy to know that he’ll continue his beloved role as Mr. Krabs in the next *SpongeBob SquarePants* movie, currently planned for 2019.

Ellen Barkin can be seen in *Hands of Stone*, a biopic about boxer Roberto Duran, in theaters now. She plays Stephanie Arcel, the wife of trainer Ray Arcel (Robert De Niro), who trained eighteen world champions including Duran.

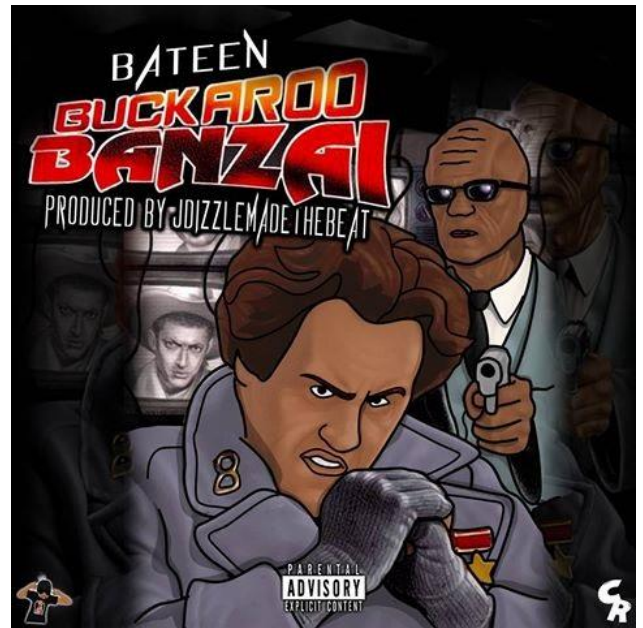
Look for **Carl Lumbly** among the supporting cast in *A Cure for Wellness*, currently expected out in February 2017. Set in a European health spa, it’s a horror thriller from Gore Verbinski, director of *The Ring* and the first three *Pirates of the Caribbean* films.



Hip Hop Buckaroo

By Steve Mattsson

Batin (pronounced Bateen) Browning is a Hip Hop artist who was born in San Francisco. His mother was of Haitian decent and his father is African American. He lived for several years in West Africa and Haiti. Like Perfect Tommy he was a fan of Billy Idol, so he started his Rap career as Bateen Idol. Later he paid respect to his Mother’s roots by recording as Young Haitti. Currently he is known simply as Bateen. Like the rest of the cool kids, Bateen is fan of the movie *Buckaroo Banzai*. Check out the video for his latest single at hiphopvideoworld.com.



Steve Mattsson: You’ve lived in some interesting parts of the world. How has this affected your music?

Bateen: It’s given me a freedom in a way. My core rhythm is mostly swayed by my time I spent in West Africa tagging along side my parents as they traveled. I guess second to that would be growing up around the Jazz musician Sun Ra which definitely added even more to my being.

SM: What inspired you to write and record a song about a movie that’s more than 30 years old?

B: My father, Augustus Browning II, turned me on to it as a kid. We both love sci-fi movies. I remember watching *Buckaroo Banzai* and being amazed by the story and the fact that the aliens in it look like me; dark skin and dreadlocks. That moved me to my soul. From that point on it was my favorite movie of all time. I still watch it every few months or so. A female producer, Jdizzle, sent me the beat and I got a chill because it reminded me of the movie and right away the words just poured out of me.

Buckaroo Banzai fans can find more about BATEEN on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [SoundCloud](#), [YouTube](#), and Twitter: @BateenIdol 🐦

W. D Richter Interview Sampler

By Rich "Special Delivery" Drees

After thirty-two years and being a major part of a documentary that runs longer than the length of the film itself, you would think that *The Adventures Of Buckaroo Banzai: Across The Eighth Dimension* director W. D. "Rick" Richter would perhaps be all talked out about the 1980s cult classic. On the contrary, Richter still welcomes the opportunity, stating "It's fun to talk about this movie because it means a lot to a lot of people. It meant a lot to us while we were making it."

As a long time Blue Blaze Irregular – I have writing that stretches all the way back to early issues of the *World Watch One* bulletin and the second issue of the first Banzai fanzine *The Penny Paradox* #humblebrag – and as film nerd, I recently had the opportunity to have an in-depth discussion with Rick for my film blog FilmBuffOnline. We talked about the history of *Buckaroo Banzai*, from its earliest days when it was nothing more than a twinkle in the eye of screenwriter Earl Mac Rauch up to today. It was a great conversation and one that plumbed such topics as the development of the project (always an interest of mine no matter what movie it is) through the difficulties encountered while filming to aborted attempts (yes, plural) to bring Buckaroo to television, the recent Moonstone comics, and more. Some things he has talked about previously, but I think we did manage to find some stories and bits of information that may surprise even diehard fans.

Here, from the opening installment, are three short – well two short and one longer – excerpts in which we discussed Richter's friendship with screenwriter Earl Mac Rauch and the early development of the screenplay.



On how the two almost met while attending Dartmouth College

"He was there one year when I was there. I was a senior and he was a freshman. Later on we discovered we both saw Arthur Penn do a Q & A after a screening of *Bonnie and Clyde*. Where he did it was a student lounge that didn't have a lot of capacity. There were a reasonable number of people, maybe twenty or thirty, and we were both there! I have no idea if we sat next to each other or anything except that we were both in that room but never met."



On when Rauch first mentioned the idea of a character named "Buckaroo Bandy"

"He had this idea for a country western, action adventure serial in effect, and that it would have sci-fi elements. You can't say, 'Oh that's interesting' and then move on to other things. 'What are you talking about?' I don't know if he had it worked out or if he just started improvising stuff verbally. It got to some point where it sounded intriguing enough, and we knew he needed money, that if we optioned it for I think initially \$1500, unwritten, that would subsidize his writing it. And he called that little contract we wrote up 'Jet Car.'"

On the number of different iterations that were developed and abandoned during the writing process

"[The] *Strange Case Of Mr. Cigars* had great promise, and he [Earl Mac Rauch] may finish it someday. There was a gigantic robot involved that was Godzilla in size. Up in the head, these evil people were running it, pulling big levers and stuff. Mr. Cigars was a villain who was going to kill a lot of world leaders by planting exploding cigars at a big conference. I knew where he was going, but he never got there in the script because he started *Lepers From Saturn*, which he started in a treatment form. He did finish that, a 57-page treatment, *Lepers From Saturn, A Buckaroo Banzai Adventure*."

"And then it just kept rolling. 'OK, are you going to write the script for that?' He said, 'Let me start it,' and it came in with a title page *A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller – Find The Jet Car, Said The President*. Through all of these, more details kept coming in. The Hong Kong Cavaliers replaced the Hopalong as Buckaroo's country western band. Penny Priddy would suddenly appear in a different context and blow through the script, but come back later when he started another adventure. He only got 67 pages into *Find The Jetcar* before he was writing *Shields Against The Devil, A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller*. That he actually went to the end of. It's a 109-page screenplay. He finished that in '75. That's where he changed the name of the Shields, that was the original name of the support group, to Knights of the Blue Shield, and then it became the Blue Blaze Irregulars subsequently."

"But through all this, the context of the world was being enriched. Whether the narrative was abandoned or not, there were ideas in there that we did hang on to, like the World Crime League. All that stuff got us to a point where we put together what we called "A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler" which was about ten or fifteen pages of each one of these things, which in some cases was all the pages he had written. A thirteen-page teaser which said "To be continued..."

The entire interview will be presented in several parts in Q & A format at FilmBuffOnline beginning the first week of October 🦋

From Mister Cigars to Lepers from Saturn A History of Buckaroo Banzai's Script Development

By Dan Berger

In 1999 the [Banzai Institute archives](#) thrilled many curious *Buckaroo Banzai* fans by posting script fragments from the collected early adventures of Dr. Banzai. For many years these bits and pieces represented the majority of what fans knew about Earl Mac Rauch's early attempts to capture and flesh out the essentials of Buckaroo and his world. It came as something of a revelation then when, earlier this summer, W.D. Richter provided *World Watch One* with a more detailed look at Buckaroo's journey through the script development process in a document titled "A Brief History of the Creation of the Original Story Concept and Narrative for the Continuing Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai by Earl Mac Rauch." It is, without question, the most complete account of Buckaroo's off screen textual journey to date.

Some explanation is in order regarding "A Brief History" and its relation to this article. The nature of "A Brief History" is primarily that of a chronology rather than a narrative. In addition, "A Brief History" contains information regarding matters beyond the scope of the script development process that are unavailable for printing at this time. To moderate the mostly chronological nature of the useable portions of "A Brief History," additional interview material and other matters of record have been incorporated to provide further context to Richter's account. It is our hope that this deepens an already amazing look behind the scenes for you, our readers. —DB

Prologue: 1971 – 1973

Everything with a beginning must start somewhere. For Buckaroo Banzai, that start was in 1971, during which President Richard Milhous Nixon's first term entered its second half, the United States' manned space program and military presence in Vietnam continued to wind down, and Jim Morrison was found dead in a bathtub in his Paris rental apartment.

1971 also saw the release of Dartmouth alumnus Earl Mac Rauch's second novel, *Arkansas Adios*. After graduating from college, Rauch returned to his native Texas and geared up for post-graduate studies. Matters quickly changed. As Rauch remembers, "I was technically a law school dropout, but only attended a week or so of classes, so basically I was hanging around Austin playing my guitar." Rauch also kept busy working for a mobile home finance company. "When I went to work for the mobile home finance people, my job involved a lot of driving," he said. "I didn't have an office or even my own apartment. I was living with five other people, so I really wasn't doing any writing at all. Nor was I making any plans."

In Los Angeles, W. D. Richter and his wife Susan were already seasoned residents of the City of Angels following his graduate studies at USC film school and a paid internship at Warner Brothers. Richter was also a fellow Dartmouth alumnus, sharing one overlapping year with Rauch during their undergraduate studies, though neither had encountered the other on campus at the time. Serendipity intervened further in the guise of a Dartmouth alumni magazine. In a 2004 interview, Richter recalled, "...there was a review for a book called *Arkansas Adios* that sounded very funny to me. So I ordered the book,



Dartmouth College, where W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch attended concurrently, but never met in 1968.

and my wife and I loved it." Richter was impressed enough to write Rauch a letter praising his writing and suggested that Rauch consider moving to L.A. to write for the movies.

Writing for film wasn't foremost on Rauch's mind, however. As he remembers, "When Rick's letter came, I mainly just wanted to see LA and maybe play in a band." So on Monday, March 20, 1972, Rauch flew to LA, checked into a motel by the freeway, and cold called the Richters to say he had taken W.D.'s advice and come to try his hand at screen writing. Fortunately, the Richters were home to take the call. Richter picked up Rauch from his motel and drove to the 1920s cottage in the Alvarado District that he and Susan were renting. They fed Mac his first Los Angeles dinner, during which, "...the three of us tried to sort out what it meant that Mac was actually sitting there in our house, ready to attack Hollywood," according to Richter.

Rauch's priorities still revolved primarily around his music. "I played an amateur night at the [Troubadour](#), performed a couple of my songs," he said. "Being a screenwriter was nothing I ever planned, although I had to be impressed by the fact that Rick drove a Cadillac."

Rauch made an impression on Richter as well. Two days later, already enamored of the itinerant Texas scribe, Richter took Mac to meet his agent, Mark Lichtman, who signed Mac on the spot. As Rauch remembers, "My first screenwriting 'assignment' was with Jay Weston. He had parties and a house up in the hills and let me come up whenever I wanted to use the pool or hang out. He frequently wasn't there and the housekeeper just let me

in. I took a girlfriend up there on occasion to use his pool and mirror-ceiling bedroom.”

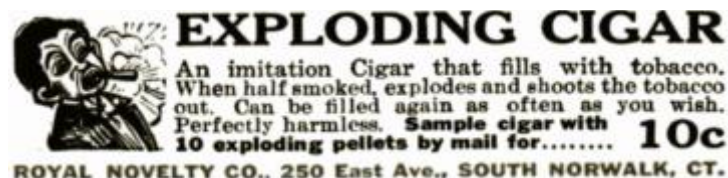
Rauch set up shop in an apartment across the street from the Richters’ cottage and went to work. “We’d have dinners and talk a lot, and he started telling us about this character, Buckaroo Bandy, that he was thinking of doing a screenplay about,” said Richter. Buckaroo’s appeal quickly grew for the Richters. “For me it was the twinkle in Mac’s eye when he told us his ideas,” Richter remembers. “We’d read his books, gotten his drift, and just assumed he’d entertain us, maybe even astonish us, with his imagination and fantastic prose.”

Script Development: 1973 – 1980

In late summer of 1973, the Richters decided to bet on Buckaroo and met with Rauch about developing the character for the big screen. “We were young, full of enthusiasm, determined to upgrade the quality of writing in Hollywood if we had a chance,” said Richter. “Mac was a chance worth taking. Susan and I took the plunge, paid Mac fifteen hundred dollars, which was a decent amount of money then for us to risk.” As Richter remembers, “Rauch pitched an original story idea for a series of interlocked, episodic motion-picture adventures to us. These adventures featured a multi-talented country-western singer and jet-car driver named Buckaroo Bandy.”

On September 27, 1973, Rauch entered into a one-year option agreement with the Richters’ corporation, Harry Bailly Productions, for what Richter describes as, “...a seriocomic screenplay, based upon a single episode from his proposed Buckaroo Bandy series. The contract called that script simply ‘JET CAR’, and Rauch’s first attempt to write it found him retitling it ‘THE STRANGE CASE OF MISTER CIGARS: A BUCKAROO BANDY MYSTERY’ and abandoning it after only 14 pages, but not before introducing the Jet Car and establishing that Buckaroo’s ‘exploits are legendary!’ and that ‘people in far-off Cairo know (his) name.’”

Richter continues, “The proposed plot line of this first episode was to be Buckaroo’s race to defeat Mister Cigars before that villain assassinated dozens of world leaders with exploding cigars at a big global conference.”



These are not the exploding cigars you are looking for.

As noted in our 2004 interview, “Mac’s working technique then was sort of improvisational,” said Richter. “He would write thirty pages and then give them to us. We’d comment on them, and he’d take them away and so radically alter them no matter what we said that he’d come back with a new story line, new characters.” This process is illustrated in detail as Richter describes the immediate aftermath of *Mister Cigars*:



Earl Mac Rauch, propping up the bus on the set of **Buckaroo Banzai**.

“Dissatisfied with the progress of this narrative, Rauch immediately began work on a different Buckaroo episode, what would become a complete 57- page treatment for a proposed screenplay entitled “LEPERS FROM SATURN — A BUCKAROO BANZAI ADVENTURE”. In this treatment, Rauch changed Buckaroo’s surname from “Bandy” to “Banzai”, revealed that Buckaroo Banzai was not only a jet-car driver but also Chief of Neurosurgery at a large hospital, and was, in addition, the founder of ‘The Institute’ (his own mysterious think tank). Buckaroo was also a popular musician with a backup band called The Hoppalongs, and he was a confidant of and trusted advisor to the President of the United States.”

Richter goes on to say, “In ‘LEPERS FROM SATURN’, Buckaroo Banzai carried a six-shooter, first encountered the beautiful Penny Priddy, and was forced to marshal his trusted legion of volunteer crimefighters, The Shields, to prevail against an otherworldly sci-fi threat to Earth: hordes of alien Lepers from Saturn disguised as ordinary human beings!”

Still not content, “Rauch at once began work on a new script that he called ‘A BUCKAROO BANZAI THRILLER — ‘FIND THE JET CAR,’ SAID THE PRESIDENT’, said Richter. “His title page declared this particular Buckaroo-Banzai episode to be “An Original Screenplay by John Texas (Earl Mac Rauch)”. Here Rauch introduced more foundational details about his fictional world and about its heroes (Buckaroo Banzai and the Hong Kong Cavaliers) and its villains (Dr. Lizard). Rauch set aside this incomplete episode after 67 pages.”

By this point, Rauch tallied a total of three adventures in various stages of completion across 138 pages of scripting and treatment, without a finished screenplay to show for his efforts. That state of fragmentation finally changed in 1980 with *Shields Against the Devil — A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller*, his first complete Buckaroo Banzai screenplay clocking in at 109 pages.

“In ‘SHIELDS AGAINST THE DEVIL’, Rauch changed the name of ‘The Shields’ to ‘Knights of The Blue Shield’

(precursors of ‘The Blue Blaze Irregulars’ who appear in subsequent episodes),” Richter said. “Buckaroo himself was further lionized as ‘the great man, BUCKAROO BANZAI, well known expert in every field’ who spoke Quechua, an Indian language of South America. ‘I learned it when I worked on a case once involving some priceless jewels,’ Buckaroo says — much like Sherlock Holmes (one of Rauch’s models for Buckaroo Banzai) often alluded to his own earlier adventures.”

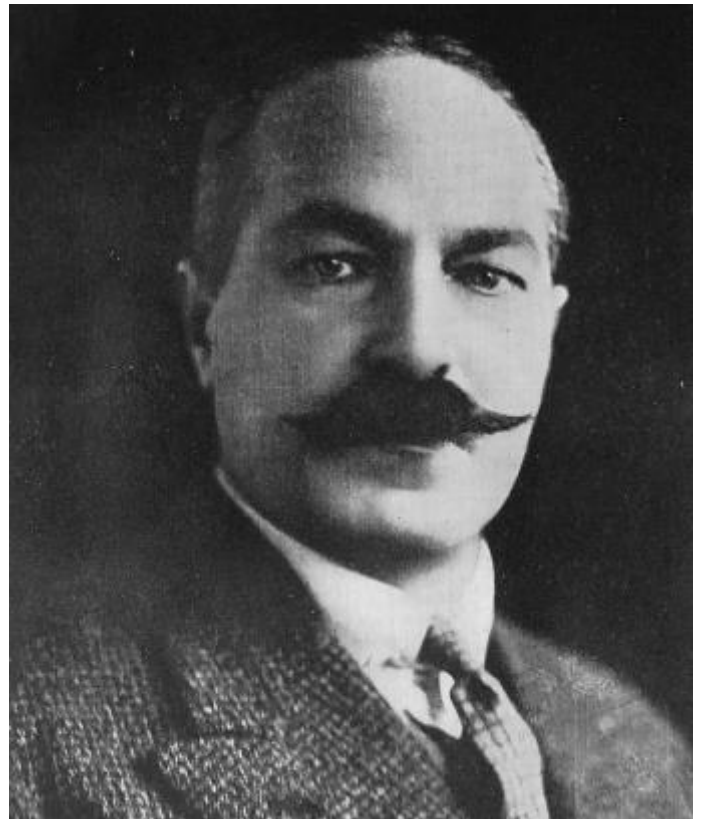
Richter continues, “Two major plots are entwined in the episode entitled ‘SHIELDS AGAINST THE DEVIL’, one concerning a gigantic weaponized robot steered by crude gears and levers and sophisticated computers operated by bad guys from a cockpit in its head. This King-Kong-like robot was owned by a vicious cartel that Buckaroo had battled before, The World Crime League, whose headquarters was a ‘Fascist Fortress... a super-secret hideout in an unknown Asian land’ and whose ‘sinister members’ were ‘like a criminal United Nations’, their ‘reigning chairman’ in this episode ‘the semi-Oriental villain HOT FAT FROM SINGAPORE.’”

Hot Fat from Singapore? What about Hanoi Xan? Rauch explains, “About Hanoi Xan...I had bought numerous Ashton-Wolfe books and believed — thinking the stories to be true accounts — that it would add a touch of realism to have a real, albeit legendary villain as opposed to having to invent one. Little did I know that Ashton-Wolfe was himself largely a self-invention who made up the majority of his stories, including Hanoi Shan.”

Ashton-Wolfe’s sketchy life is explained further in Rick Lai’s intro to [The Crimes of Hanoi Shan](#) by H. Ashton-Wolfe:

“Ashton-Wolfe’s literary career seems to have peaked in 1932. He sold the film rights to his “true” Sûreté accounts to David O. Selznick of RKO pictures. Selznick was hoping to make a series of B movies featuring Frank Morgan, the actor best known for playing the title character in *The Wizard of Oz*, as Ashton-Wolfe. According to the Turner Classic Movie (TCM) website, the RKO legal department discovered that Ashton-Wolfe’s accounts were full of blatant falsehoods. Subsequently, only one film, *Secrets of the French Police* (1932), was released. The name of Frank Morgan’s character was changed from Harry Ashton-Wolfe to Francois St. Cyr. The screenplay was based on Ashton-Wolfe’s “The Mystery of the Orly Highway” and two untitled stories from *American Weekly*, as well as Samuel Ornitz’s *Lost Empress*, an unpublished novel about Princess Anastasia of Russia.”

Rauch continued, “Whether aware of this history or not, the studio legal department — presumably Fox — asked us to change the spelling in the novelization from Shan to Xan. Since I thought at the time that Hanoi Shan had really existed, I thought it a strange request. But perhaps their crack lawyers had researched it and thought I was plagiarizing...either that, or they were afraid the real Hanoi Shan would sue for libel. Who knows...”



H. Ashton-Wolfe, a man, a myth, and a legend of his own making. Ashton-Wolfe also inspired the creation of Buckaroo Banzai’s most enduring foe, the nefarious blackguard Hanoi Xan.

Returning to the script, “This first narrative thread in ‘SHIELDS AGAINST THE DEVIL’ concerned America’s race to finish the prototype Jet Car before The World Crime League, who had stolen all its plans, built one of their own and used it for evil purposes,” Richter said. “The melodrama played out against a second interwoven plot as Buckaroo figured out that Adolf Hitler never died in that Berlin bunker but escaped disguised as a woman and was now possibly hiding in Ecuador.”

While “Shields Against the Devil,” concluded Rauch’s initial burst of writing about Buckaroo, it did so with an eye towards future episodes. According to Richter, “In a short prose piece at the script’s conclusion, Rauch laid out his plans for the next Buckaroo episode, ‘FORBIDDEN VALLEY’ and set Buckaroo off in the Jet Car, heading for that mysterious, remote jungle locale in search of Adolf Hitler.”

The Essential Buckaroo: 1981-1984

With a completed script and a number of partially completed episodes in hand, it was time for Richter to set about selling Buckaroo to a studio. On March 25, 1981, Richter and fellow Banzai producer Neil Canton approached veteran producer Sydney Beckerman with a condensed version of all the Buckaroo Banzai material in a bound volume called “A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler”. Below is a reproduction of the text from the introductory page:

THROUGHOUT RECORDED HISTORY EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS
HAVE CATAPULTED ORDINARY MEN FROM THE RANKS OF
HUMANITY AND PLACED THOSE RARE INDIVIDUALS SMACK
BETWEEN THE REST OF US AND GLOBAL CATASTROPHE.

AGAIN AND AGAIN THE FREE WORLD HAS STOOD PERCHED
ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER.

AGAIN AND AGAIN THERE HAVE BEEN THOSE BRAVE
SOLDIERS AND STATESMEN FORGED OF STERNER STUFF,
OF IRON WILLS AND STEELY INTELECT, WHO HAVE
AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MINUTE THRUST THEMSELVES
INTO THE FRAY AND YANKED US ALL BACK TO SAFER
GROUND...

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
GEORGE WASHINGTON
THOMAS JEFFERSON
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER
WINSTON CHURCHILL (BRITISH)
JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY
JAMES BOND (BRITISH)
HENRY KISSINGER
RALPH NADER

AND NOW, ONCE AGAIN, THE TRUMPET CALL OF DANGER
SOUNDS ALL TOO LOUD AND ALL TOO CLEAR.

AND ONCE AGAIN A GREAT MAN OF THE HOUR EMERGES.
ONCE AGAIN, IT'S TIME FOR...

The page leaves hanging what it's time for, but it's a good bet it's Buckaroo Banzai. Whatever it was, the collected adventures were enough to convince Beckerman that Buckaroo was worth showing to his good friend David Begelman, chairman of MGM. The next day, Beckerman, Canton, and Richter met with Begelman, pitched him Buckaroo Banzai, and left him with a copy of "A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler".

On the afternoon of March 27, 1981, a day after the *Buckaroo-Banzai* pitch meeting, Begelman told Beckerman that MGM wanted to hire Rauch to write a work based upon *Lepers From Saturn — A Buckaroo Banzai Adventure*. Rauch became the writer-for-hire commissioned to write a screenplay simply titled *Buckaroo Banzai* on April 9, 1981. Regarding the title change, Richter commented, "Begelman deemed the episode's original title, 'LEPERS FROM SATURN', in poor taste."

And the rest is history. "Earl Mac Rauch wrote the script, which was eventually entitled "THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI ACROSS THE 8TH DIMENSION", and it became the motion picture of the same name," said Richter." It was released domestically by 20TH Century Fox on August 10, 1984."

Epilogue: 2016

On a final note, Lewis Smith made the observation earlier in this issue that, "A reoccurring theme in *Buckaroo Banzai* is making fun movie clichés." The history of Buckaroo's development, as spelled out by Richter, did not directly or indirectly address the origin of this thematic motif. Was *Buckaroo Banzai* written as something that celebrates science fiction tropes, dismantles them, or both? Was it a directorial decision, Rauch's design from the beginning, something people found on the set, or something else entirely?

"Hard to believe, I bet, but we never had a single discussion about any of this, either during the development of the script or the making of the movie," Richter said. "Mac wrote what amused him, and it, in turn, amused me. We never saw it as satire or an homage or had 'lofty' discussions about anything. Buckaroo just was whatever it was. The process of creating Buckaroo and his world was a free-wheeling, exuberant, make-it-up-as-we-went-along joyride, but with Mac at the wheel, I always felt a certain discipline behind the high-caliber madness."



Buckaroo Banzai Prop, Toy, and Model Update



Check out this amazing handmade Oscillation Overthruster and case. [Rex Wiederanders' blog](#) walks you through the experience. You can also [purchase your own Overthruster](#) on ebay.



See the mysteries of Sean Charlesworth's cool 3D printed Jet Car model [revealed at tested.com](#). Have \$275 lying around? [You can buy your own](#) 3D printed Jet Car model on Etsy. In a similar vein, [a Lego Jet Car](#) would have been great, but it didn't get enough demand. If it is proposed again, VOTE!



Want your own [resin model kit](#) of a Red Lectroid thermal pod? Some may say, "It's a very bad design," but you can be the judge for \$179.99. If you act soon enough you will also get a resin cast of the alien specimen for the 8th Dimension in both its "rolled" and "unrolled" versions at no extra cost. 🐉

What's New with BBI Jack Burton?

W.D. Richter directed *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* and wrote *Big Trouble in Little China*. Because of a similarity of tone, many fans thought that BTiLC was an incognito sequel to TABB. [Ready Player One](#) author Ernest Cline's first screenplay was a spec script for the BB sequel *Against the World Crime League*. In it he [featured a cameo by BTiLC's Jack Burton as a Blue Blaze Irregular](#) assisting Team Banzai. For us, that's good enough for a Jack Burton update in this issue of *World Watch One*!



"Big Trouble in Little China" Reboot:

Is Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson too cool to play hapless hero Jack Burton in a BTiLC reboot? We may all get a chance to find out. The reboot is still being developed. Read all about it [here](#).



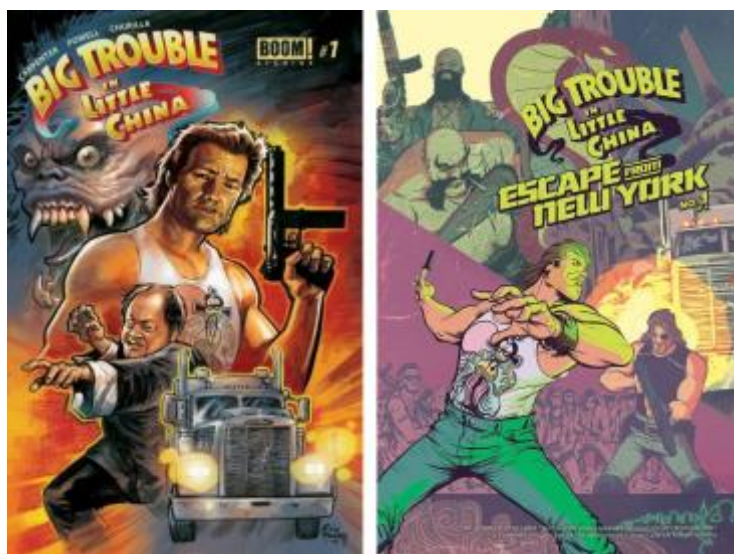
Jack Burton Toys:

Whether you keep them mint-in-the-package or pose them on your computer desk, Funko has BTiLC toys for you. Both the Funko POP! and ReAction Jack Burton figures can be found for under \$10.00 each [here](#).

[Sideshow's sixth scale Jack Burton figure](#) isn't available yet, but it looks like it'd cost about \$1,373.00. It'll be expensive, but perhaps they will go nothing or double with you.

Jack Burton Comic Books:

"Big Trouble in Little China" Volumes I-III collect all of the Eric Powell and Brian Churilla stories from the BOOM! Studios comic book series. [They are available on Amazon.com for \\$12.00 and less.](#)



Coming in October from BOOM! is a [“Big Trouble in Little China” and “Escape from New York” cross-over](#) featuring a team-up between Jack Burton and Snake Plissken. Too much Kurt Russell is never enough.

Drinking with Jack Burton in Portland, Oregon:



Portland’s Chinatown district was the location for a hip watering hole called “Big Trouble” that featured a portrait of Jack Burton over the bar.

P-Town’s Breakside Brewing, in collaboration with BTU Brasserie, brewed a beer called “Jack Burton”; a German-style dark-ale, something along the lines of Frankenheim Alt, that adds “hot honey” post-fermentation. There’s a sting of spicy heat in this one, along with notes of butterscotch. (ABV 6.3%)

BTU, in collaboration with Breakside, brewed a companion beer named after “Wang Chi”, the true hero of the movie. It was light kettle-soured witbier, which added green tea, chamomile, and citrus flavor to yield a beer with prominent herbal flavor and citrusy tartness. (ABV 5.6%)

“Jack Burton” was a bit hot for me and “Wang Chi” was a little too sour, but Portland’s experimental brewery called Lawbrewatory nailed it with “Pork Chop Express,” a lager made from steamed rice and koji mold, the same ingredient used to ferment sake. It had a slight umami nose and a tinge of sweetness. It’s a dry brew, slowly lagered to give it a distinguished and full flavor (ABV 5.1%) “Another round please, and may the wings of liberty never lose a feather!” 🦅

Buckaroo Banzai Role Playing Game Update

By Alan “Dragon” Smith

As some may know, back in 2011, the news came through that there was a Kickstarter crowdfunding project for a Buckaroo Banzai Role Playing Game. I know many fans were excited, and some pitched in their money to help see this project through with expectations of it being available early in 2012.

On a personal level, I was rather curious myself. I had developed a BBI RPG years earlier that a handful of us played online using a yahogroup. I know, turn the clock back...

Unfortunately, the Kickstarter for Adamant Entertainment’s Buckaroo Banzai RPG was stopped and communications were sketchy. For this newsletter, I dug in to see what happened and what is going on.

Gareth-Michael Skarka is the sole proprietor of Adamant Entertainment and hires freelancers to do some of the work on their projects, but otherwise, it is a one person show. He was willing to answer some of my questions.

Gareth-Michael admits that he announced the BB project far too early in the process. He told me that he cut off pre-orders when he realized that approvals were going to take longer than anticipated. If and when the project is good to go, he will reopen pre-orders and promote widely.

One of the recent holdups was another project that Adamant was working on, a role playing game called *Far West*, based on the tropes of the Spaghetti Western and Chinese Wuxia, with some steampunk elements.

As for Buckaroo Banzai, they are waiting to hear from the licensor, both on manuscript approvals and in response to the questions about how the proposed BB TV series by Kevin Smith and Amazon might affect their license, if at all.

Gareth-Michael has been a fan of TABB since before the film’s release, when Starlog was covering it in previews. He also subscribed to the original World Watch One newsletters and was known as BBI G-Man. He told me that he had never gotten the opportunity to see TABB in a theater, but that he was able to get an original printing of the novel, which he read over and over until the movie was released on VHS. (For the younger readers, VHS was a recording technology that predated DVDs and Blu-ray.) Finally, Gareth-Michael was able to see TABB on the big screen at the New York Film Festival screening hosted by Kevin Smith on October 2011 (where there was a Q&A with Peter Weller (Buckaroo Banzai) and John Lithgow (Lord John Whorfin)).

So, at least for now, The Buckaroo Banzai Roll Playing Game can be compared to the announcement at the end of the docudrama about the next film, *Against the World Crime League*. Fans can keep track of the game’s status via Adamant’s newly-redesigned website: <http://www.adamantentertainment.com/> 🦅

Mysterium: Buckaroo Banzai's Most Obscure Adventure

By Steve Mattsson



In 2011, Moonstone Books published a comic book miniseries featuring crossovers of their licensed characters called “Phases of the Moon”. During the ‘30s, The Spider and Domino Lady battled a cult of powerful men called “The Red Mass”. In the ‘70s, the same cult experimented with mind altering drugs, but were thwarted by Honey West and Carl Kolchak. A present day adventure featuring Sheena and Captain Action was announced, but never appeared. Two years later Moonstone published an album titled Phases of the Moon: Full Moon, containing the first two chapters and the unpublished third chapter. The collection was enhanced with a Buckaroo Banzai prose adventure by Earl Mac Rauch and was concluded with a Carl Kolchak text story.

“Buckaroo Banzai: Mysterium” is credited to Buckaroo’s biographer “the Reno Kid” as told to Earl Mac Rauch. The story is set in the present day and has the Hong Kong Cavaliers playing a benefit gig for the Mediterranean Monk Seal on the French Riviera. Buckaroo, Reno, Perfect Tommy, Pecos, and Lady Gillette meet with a reporter who is investigating The Red Mass. Mac Rauch peppers the seven page story with actual figures from the history of truth serums and mind control. It’s implied that Wild Bill Donovan, Hubertus Strughold, Allen Dulles, Mary & Cord Meyer, JFK, and Aldous Huxley are pawns or victims of The Red Mass.

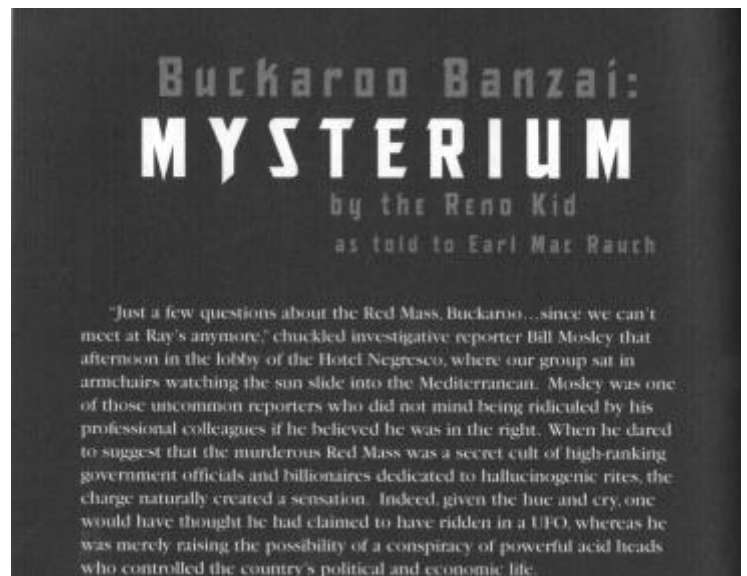
“Mysterium” is Latin for mystery, but it may have an even more specific meaning in the story. The German theologian, Rudolf Otto* writes of “mysterium tremendum et fascinans”, or a



Rudolf Otto ponders the implications of **Mysterium**.

mystery before which man is both repelled and attracted. Reno mentions Otto and his experience of “numinous” or the presence of the divine. This ties into the conclusion of the Mysterium chapter and the complete Phases of the Moon.

The story is set in the present day and features Carl Kolchak tying up all the loose ends (with the exception of people buying a spry eighty-plus-years-old Kolchak without question). Buckaroo is mentioned a couple of times, explaining that information he provided was essential to stopping the bad guys.



Phases of the Moon does not appear to be available on Moonstone’s website, but [Amazon has it in stock](#).

Bottom line: Earl Mac Rauch’s seven page story is interesting, but the package is recommended for Buckaroo Banzai completists only.



*Fun fact: C.S. Lewis (The Chronicles of Narnia) is the one who brought Rudolf Otto’s work to the attention of the mainstream. Aldous Huxley (Brave New World), John F. Kennedy, and Lewis all died within about an hour of each other on November, 22nd, 1963. Hanoi Xan’s whereabouts on that date are unknown.

The Quest for the Official Buckaroo Banzai Soundtrack

By Sean Murphy

When my friend Elyse discovered that I'd never seen *Buckaroo Banzai*, she proceeded to drag me to a midnight showing on the big screen, telling me that the film would be totally up my alley. The year was 1996.

I was completely blown away by what I saw and I wanted to learn as much as I could about the movie. I left the theater humming the music that played over the team march. The first thing I needed was to get my hands on the official soundtrack so I could listen to that theme music again.

Imagine my shock and disappointment when I discovered that no official soundtrack existed. The reason why was discussed by the film's director, W. D. "Rick" Richter, in an interview found in the December, 1984 issue of *Starlog* magazine. He revealed that "Several record labels wanted (the soundtrack), but the powers that be kept upping the ante...Then, it simply became too late. We lost a major source of publicity."

I was pretty bummed out to discover that there should have been an official release but studio politics/ego/whatever got in the way.

My quest to find out more information about Buckaroo Banzai continued and led me to ask more and more questions, such as "Where can I find the novelization?" and "What is the watermelon doing there?" I eventually compiled the information I found and put up the [Buckaroo Banzai FAQ](#) on the web in 1996. I hoped that others could share in what I'd discovered and add their information as well. But...

The one unanswered question, the one uncompleted quest that nags me twenty years later is this: Will we ever see an official release of the *Buckaroo Banzai* soundtrack by composer Michael Boddicker?

"Wait just a minute," I hear you say. "I've seen the soundtrack available for download on the internet?"

Yes, you have. That soundtrack download is a bootleg.

The sound quality of the bootleg is not great and the release raises many questions. Are the track names correct? Are there more unreleased tracks in the vaults? Wouldn't some official liner notes be awesome?

The Gold Edition version of the soundtrack bootleg appears to be the audio source for at least four other subsequent CD bootlegs as well as the digital downloads found on the internet. The history of the bootleg, however, is muddled.

According to a [now defunct website](#) with information about the various bootleg releases, one rumor says that some of the film's crew were responsible for making copies of the soundtrack:

"This information was sent by an anonymous source claiming to be on the sound crew of *Buckaroo Banzai*.



According to this source, several members of the sound crew received soundtrack reels as a bonus for working on the film. Word passed down to them was that there was a possibility that no soundtrack would be released officially by those owning the rights.

So, one night these sound editors got together and ran the reels onto audio cassette. This was the closest thing there was going to be to an "official" release of the title.

Later on, a few of them got together again. One of them had connections to a small recording studio. With the cassette copy of the soundtrack and some of the archived sound effects, they spent a few days making this copy of the soundtrack. About 100 copies were pressed by this group on an 'in-house cd recorder."

While this rumor sounds plausible, there is no way to verify the anonymous source.

I received an email in 1999 that discussed how the Gold Edition bootleg may have gotten out into the wild. The author of the email said they acquired this information firsthand from the owner of a company called SuperCollector while visiting the store. The email claimed that SuperCollector themselves made the Gold Edition. They discontinued distributing the bootleg after Boddicker visited the store and asked them to stop. The owner of SuperCollector is said to have offered Boddicker \$10,000 for permission to put out the Buckaroo Banzai soundtrack officially but Boddicker declined, saying that it was worth \$30,000 to him. There is no way to verify this rumor now that the company is out of business.

Ironically, some of the music found on the Gold Edition bootleg isn't even from the film. As reported on the [Perseverance Records FAQ](#), "According to Michael Boddicker himself, the first bootleg, the Gold Edition, actually contains two demos he did for a Honda commercial, music that wasn't in the movie at all!" I wish he'd said which two tracks.



“Hold on, what does Perseverance Records have to do with the soundtrack?” you ask. An excellent question. I reached out to Owner Robin Esterhammer, who agreed to talk about his efforts to get an official soundtrack released. He also put me in touch with Chris Landry, who first attempted to release the soundtrack on his now defunct record label *AirStrip One*.

According to Chris, “In the late 1990s I started my own mini-label, *Airstrip One*. After my first release, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, I was looking for something to follow it up with and a lot of people suggested *Buckaroo Banzai*. As with my other releases, I wanted to involve the composer as much as possible, rather than just use whatever the studio had. I forget who connected us, but I got a meeting with Michael Boddicker in the autumn of 1999. He was very pleasant and seemed very interested to see the music released.”

Chris continued, “Michael was in the process of moving his office/studio in the Valley, so our initial enthusiastic meeting led to a series of less and less frequent phone calls until finally, after a lack of headway, I decided to pursue other projects. I understand that when Robin [Esterhammer] approached Michael for *Perseverance* almost a decade later, he was still moving, so maybe it was just an excuse; I’m not sure.”

I discovered in my own discussions with Boddicker that his studio location fell victim to Eminent Domain, the law by which the government can appropriate private property. He was subsequently forced to pack up and move his entire studio. This has been a long, drawn out process and some of his equipment is tied up in storage. This may have been what he was talking about to Robin and Chris when he discussed moving his studio.

Robin picks up the story from his conversation with Boddicker in April, 2007, “When I contacted MB initially, he was very enthusiastic and all gung-ho about working with me on the soundtrack. Releasing the score actually seemed like a reality.

He had been looking for a label to release the music on, but for whatever reason, couldn't find one that he was happy with.”

Unfortunately the outcome was similar to *Airstrip One*. “I didn't get very far [in the process]. Michael wanted a sample licensing agreement, which I gave him. We had a couple of meetings but every subsequent attempt from my side to set up a follow-up was shot down by MB.”

Obviously the best source of information about the *Buckaroo Banzai* soundtrack would be from Boddicker himself. I've touched base with him on and off for over 15 years. The pattern described by Robin and Chris, of repeated attempts to have discussions with Boddicker that eventually diminish over time, has been my experience as well.

My first contact with Boddicker was in 2002, the year the *Buckaroo Banzai* Special Edition DVD was released. My hope was that the DVD release signaled a chance that the official soundtrack might finally be released too. Since “Hope is not a strategy,” I reached out to Boddicker and put him back in touch with Rick Richter, who had worked closely with MGM on the DVD. I wondered if the same issues that were resolved when MGM acquired the film's rights also applied to the soundtrack.

While I had Boddicker on the phone, I asked him if the original music from the film still existed. The answer was “yes” and, coincidentally, he had just transferred the original music from the 24 track master tapes, which he owns, to a digital format on his computer. He said that everything sounded great. I was very happy to know that he had the music safely preserved.

My understanding at the time was that although Boddicker owns the rights to the actual tapes, he does not own the rights to the music. Since Begelman made such a mess of all the legal issues around *Buckaroo Banzai*, no one is sure who does or does not own the rights to the music and the rights to release it. This makes releasing an official version of the soundtrack very difficult. If Boddicker releases the soundtrack and someone else comes forth with a signed contract saying that they own the rights to release the music, he could be sued.

However, Robin and Chris had a different understanding from Boddicker. According to Robin, “When I mentioned to him that Columbia or Sony owned the rights he just dismissed it and said that he owned them. Apparently, he was not concerned at all about any rights issues.” Chris concurred, saying “Studio licensing never came up in our conversations, but as Robin mentioned, Michael indicated that he was in possession of the master tapes and that he owned the rights to the recordings as well. It bears mentioning that according to Michael, in addition to the score for the film he also created a lot of the sound design for the film – spaceship noises, alien sound effects, and so on. The album we talked about proposed to include not only the complete score, but alternate and unused music and these sound effects as well.” So there are unreleased tracks in the vault after all! That answers one of the questions I had about the bootleg.

When I asked them if they thought the release of the soundtrack was a legal issue or more a matter of Boddicker's whim, Robin said simply, "It is just his whim." Chris said, "*Buckaroo Banzai* was, realistically, a commercial failure on its release more than 30 years ago. And regardless of the cult following that's built up over the years, Michael has moved on to other things, so it's just not a priority for him. It is a legal issue as well, in that no studio is going to assign one of its expensive legal staff to research the music rights issues for weeks or months on something they will make so little money. I ran into the same thing with Turner when I tried to license the rights for *The Hunger*. The rights for the film had been passed around to so many studios that even though Turner now owned the film as part of the UA catalog, they weren't completely sure they owned the rights to the music and they couldn't be bothered to devote any time or resources to finding out."

Back in 2002 I mentioned to Boddicker that I'd seen copies of the Gold Edition bootleg for sale for \$35, \$50, and even \$100 in the past. I thought the information about the high prices might help motivate MGM to think about releasing the soundtrack and making some money. I offered to send him a copy of the bootleg and, when he accepted, I burned a copy and sent it to him. I was happy to do this at the time but the bootleg pricing information came back to haunt me when I heard about the negotiations with *Perseverance Records* and *AirStrip One*.

Robin said, "We both agreed that we wanted a superior product to what had been released up to that point in the various bootleg incarnations. He told me we could charge \$25.00 for a single CD, because he knew that the fans were willing to pay that much. I didn't quite agree with that, so maybe that's the reason why he stopped returning my calls and emails."

Chris agreed. "I also remember Michael being quite certain that people would be lining up to pay \$25.00 or more for the album, and that this is what he would be getting – no royalties or distribution or anything. He was quite sure this album would put his kids through college. Like Robin, I didn't think things would work out as he envisioned, though we never got that far in the discussion for me to express that. Anyone in the collectors' soundtrack market knows that you're lucky to see any profit at all from a limited archival release of an older film, no matter how popular it is."

I worry now that my attempts to help get a soundtrack release to happen might actually have contributed to the delay. An agonizing thought.

When it was time to work on the 20th Anniversary newsletter in 2004, I reached out to Boddicker to see if I could interview him about the soundtrack. Although he expressed an interest in doing the interview, the timing was never right for him to actually make it happen, even after multiple attempts on my part to find a good time to talk. I'd hoped that if I could interview him, I could share the information with Banzai fans

and see how they could help to make a soundtrack release a reality.

The 25th anniversary newsletter rolled around in 2009 and I again reached out to Boddicker for an interview. I had thirty-three questions lined up under four topics: Creation of the Soundtrack, the Non-Release of the Music, Rumors, and How to get the Soundtrack Released. More back and forth coordinating emails occurred but there was never a good time to make the interview happen, and I reluctantly decided to let it go. Seven years is a long time to keep your fingers crossed for an interview.

I touched base with Boddicker and let him know about the Kevin Smith screening of *Buckaroo Banzai* in 2011. He paid me a complement by saying that he thought I should write the liner notes for an official soundtrack release should it ever happen. I was flattered and excited at the possibility. He stated that he'll get to releasing the soundtrack someday, but that his life was busy at the moment.

As new internet distribution models sprouted up over the years, I would check in with Boddicker to see if any of them could help get the soundtrack released. I mentioned the idea of using Kickstarter to get an official soundtrack out there in 2013. He'd thought about that concept and appreciated the thought. I sent him information about Bandcamp.com in 2014 where he could distribute the music himself from the site and set the price.

The *Buckaroo Banzai* Blu-ray was released in August, 2016 and, to my surprise, Boddicker was interviewed in the new documentary. Unfortunately he didn't say anything about the status of the soundtrack. I reached out again to see if there was any movement on a soundtrack. I did not get a response.

I asked Robin and Chris if they thought we'd ever get an official release of the *Buckaroo Banzai* soundtrack. Robin said, "I don't think a soundtrack is ever going to happen. Michael sits on the tapes, and as long as he doesn't want to release it, there won't be one. He had been approached by several other people and was always excited in the beginning, but that waned after a while, so the people always lost interest. My label's name is Perseverance, but even I can't be strung along forever." Chris said, "*Buckaroo Banzai* is one of those film properties that has changed hands a number of times, so the rights issues are a bit convoluted. I wouldn't say 'never,' but I think it's unlikely we will see a legitimate release any time soon."

Sadly, this leaves everyone patiently waiting for an official soundtrack at a standstill. I wish I had better news. I continue to be hopeful and yet I have to admit to being disappointed at the same time.

Then again, this wouldn't be a quest if the end result was easy to obtain. I've kept my fingers crossed for an official release since 1996. I will continue to keep them crossed.



Hong Kong Cavaliers Reunion Tour

By Steve Mattsson

I had roughed out my schedule for this year's San Diego Comic-Con International. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar signing copies of the exclusive Comic-Con Edition of his *Mycroft Holmes* comic book, Paul Gulacy's "Spies Vixens, and Masters of Kung Fu" panel, and the "30th Anniversary of Dark Horse Comics" panel were locked in. Then I saw two late additions to the schedule:

"*Buckaroo Banzai*: Getting the Band Back Together: The Hong Kong Cavaliers Signing" with Lewis Smith (Perfect Tommy), Billy Vera (Pinky Carruthers), Damon Hines (Scooter Lindley), Gerald Peterson (Rug Sucker), and Pepe Serna (Reno Nevada) autographing *Buckaroo Banzai* memorabilia. Saturday 11:30am and "Getting the Band Back Together Panel". Smith, Vera, Hines, Peterson, and Serna will discuss their experiences making this cult classic, their participation in the upcoming Shout! Factory special edition Blu-ray, and their potential involvement in the new Banzai television series being spearheaded by Kevin Smith. Panel moderated by Joe Parrington (publicist, Raining Hollywood Publicity) Saturday 5:30pm.

These I had to see.

There was a small line at the signing when I arrived. Unfortunately, Lewis Smith, (now less than) Perfect Tommy, was a no-show for the signing and the panel. The other Hong Kong Cavaliers were very gracious as long as you gave them "a brand new *crisp* twenty-dollar bill" for their autograph. Pepe Serna was especially kind to the fans. Several fans wore Banzai Institute t-shirts and jackets. I wore my Jack Burton tank-top from *Big Trouble in Little China*, because I'm naturally irritating. The fan who took the cake, though, came dressed in New Jersey's full Tom Mix regalia. I'm not sure if he could sing, but he could dance.

Later at the panel, we learned that Gerald Peterson is an alto, tenor, and baritone saxophonist who was a charter member of Billy Vera & The Beaters. He also plays with Linda Ronstadt, Kim Carnes, Olivia Newton-John, and 38 Special. Gerald was the "double sax" player for the Hong Kong Cavaliers and also fought with Buckaroo as a member of the bad ass carpet cleaning company, The Rugsuckers.

Scooter Lindley, Blue Blaze Irregular 41½, has grown up into Damon Hines, Ed.D. Damon is an Adjunct Professor at Loyola Marymont University for Communication Studies. He also played Nick Murtaugh in *Lethal Weapon* 1-4.

Pepe Serna has probably stayed the busiest of the cast in attendance, appearing in over 100 movies and 300 television episodes. The day of the panel also happened to be his birthday, so the packed crowd joined in for an off-key, but sincere, rendition of "Happy Birthday". ¡Feliz cumpleaños, Pepe!

Billy Vera is a cool dude. He played Blue Blaze Irregular Pinky Carruthers and acted in many other movies and television shows. He wrote hit songs for Rick Nelson and Dolly Parton.



Billy Vera (L) and Gerald Peterson (R) at San Diego Comic Con.

He is the leader of Billy Vera & the Beaters who had a number one hit with "At this Moment" in 1987. As a music historian, he has put together re-issues and completions for artists like Count Basie, Nat King Cole, and BB King. You've also heard his voice-over work, saying, "AM PM, too much good stuff".

Both Damon and Billy talked about their affection for Bill Henderson, who played Scooter's Dad, Caspar Lindley. Bill died earlier this year at the age of 90. He was a mentor to Damon as a young actor. Bill was also an accomplished jazz singer who worked with Oscar Peterson, Count Basie, and many others. Billy worked as the series supervisor and wrote the liner notes for the two volume compilation of "Bill Henderson, His Complete Vee Jay Recordings". Bill was thrilled that Billy was able to arrange this retrospective of Bill's early career. Billy was happy to work with his fellow Blue Blaze Irregular again.

Damon mentioned that Kevin Smith had invited the cast to the IMDB yacht party earlier at the con. Smith told them that a *Buckaroo Banzai* TV series for Amazon was looking good and that he wanted to use as many of the original cast in the show as possible. This did not mean that they would be playing their original roles, however. For example, Peter Weller playing Hanoi Xan, rather than Buckaroo, was a possibility.

Publicist Joe Parrington talked about reuniting the Hong Kong Cavaliers initially for the special features of the Shout! Factory Blu-ray and then bringing the band to San Diego. According to Joe, the tour is not done yet and the cast will appear at screenings of *Buckaroo Banzai* in Portland, OR and Seattle, WA later this year. Keep checking [Joe's website](#) for Hong Kong Cavalier appearances in your area.

During the audience Q&A session, David Blanchard, the event organizer for "Filmed Here", introduced himself. "Filmed Here" is a company that puts on immersive movie location experiences. They do location tours with cast members, screenings, and other special events for fans. They recreated the Chicago parade from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* for "Ferris Fest." Blanchard would like to do an immersive *Buckaroo Banzai* event culminating with a fan participation Team Banzai March at the Sepulveda Dam. [Keep checking David's website](#) for more information on the *Buckaroo Banzai* immersion 🐾

The Twitter Exchange that Spawned a Film Festival

By Steve Mattsson



Shaun of the Dead director Edgar Wright is a movie buff and a firm believer in being honest about the holes in his film knowledge. His philosophy is that, “it’s never too late to see a movie.” So when a Twitter follower of Wright’s was aghast that he had never seen *Buckaroo Banzai*, he decided to do something about it. Rather than just watching *Buckaroo* on DVD, Wright upped the degree of difficulty by deciding that it was a movie that he wanted to see in 35mm and with an audience. There were many other classic and cult films that Wright wanted to see, but hadn’t. He compiled his own list and asked for suggestions from his friends in the industry. This led to the film festival at LA’s New Beverly Cinema called, “The Wright Stuff III: ‘Movies Edgar Has Never Seen’”. The New Beverly is owned by Quentin Tarantino, who contributed to Wright’s list of films. The festival consisted of a series of eighteen movies culminating in a special midnight screening of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Wright, Richard Kelly (the director of *Donnie Darko*), and *Buckaroo* uber-fan Kevin Smith were scheduled to host the finale. [The trailer for the festival](#) is set to the Team Banzai March.

The final night for Wright Stuff III and the *Buckaroo* screening was scheduled for December 16th, 2011. It was only a couple of months before that I had convinced my wife Shaune to fly to Manhattan with me to see *Buckaroo Banzai* at the New York Film Festival. I didn’t think I should play the “It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity!” card again so quickly. Fortunately I had two things going for me. LA is much closer to Portland and the 16th is my birthday. I could fly down in the afternoon, watch three movies and hop on the first flight back the next day. I wouldn’t even need to pay for a hotel. It was a go. I contacted Big Shoulders and he worked up some new “Wright Stuff III” trade dress for the *World Watch One* newsletter. I printed up the latest edition and headed to Hollywood.

I arrived at the New Beverly and received permission to put a stack of *World Watch Ones* in the lobby. The double feature for the evening was titled “Noir is the New Black.” It featured *Hickey and Boggs** and *Cutter’s Way*,** both grim crime dramas set in sunny LA. The former reunites Robert Culp and Bill Cosby,

the stars of *I Spy*, in a downbeat private detective thriller. It was the first screenwriting credit for Walter Hill. *Cutter’s Way* was directed by Ivan Passer and starred John Herd and Jeff Bridges as damaged friends trying to solve a murder mystery. The double feature was hosted by Wright, Elvis Mitchell (former film critic of the *New York Times*), Josh Olson (screenwriter for *A History of Violence*), and Daniel Walter (screenwriter for *Heathers*).

First up was *Hickey and Boggs* (1972). Screenwriter Walter Hill was introduced as a surprise guest. After getting his start with *Hickey and Boggs*, Hill went on to become a respected writer, director, and producer working on such films as *The Warriors*, *48 Hrs.*, and *Aliens*. Wright, Mitchell, Olson, and Walter were amazed when Hill said he was a big fan of playwright Harold Pinter. Walter Hill then got to watch his first movie in 35 mm with an audience.

Cutter’s Way (1981) concluded the first section of programing for the evening.

It was time to get something to eat before *Buckaroo Banzai*’s midnight screening. [Pink’s Hot Dogs](#) is a Hollywood landmark and has been featured in many movies, including *Hickey and Boggs*. It was only a ten minute walk from the New Beverly Theater to Pink’s on Melrose, but nobody walks in LA. It was a three minute drive to Pink’s and twenty minutes to find parking. I considered the Brando Dog, but ended up getting Pink’s classic Chili Dog.



Pink’s Hot Dogs of Hollywood. Photo by Steve Mattsson.

Finally back at the theater for the midnight main event. Edgar Wright introduced director Richard Kelly and explained that Kevin Smith had a flat tire and was running late. Kelly talked about his affection for *Buckaroo Banzai* and the influence it had on his style. Kelly also told a story about his father who worked for NASA and developed the camera that was used on the Mars Viking Lander. When Kelly was in the 3rd grade his father took him to see *Buckaroo Banzai* on the big screen. To Kelly, his rocket scientist father was *Buckaroo Banzai*. Wright and Kelly

extended their talk to give Smith more time. Kelly thought that *Buckaroo* was like *Star Wars* if it was written by Terry Southern (screenwriter of *Doctor Strangelove****). He talked about how much comedian Patton Oswalt loves *Buckaroo Banzai* and how Oswalt was like the cool big brother who would let you read his comic book collection. Smith was a no-show, but the crowd didn't mind. They were ready for the show to start.

The festival had been showing thematically appropriate trailers before each movie. What were they going to show before *Buckaroo Banzai*? George Pal's *Doc Savage*? John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China*? They screened the trailer for *Beyond the Black Rainbow* by Panos Cosmatos. You can [see for yourself](#) if it fits the Banzai vibe.

Edgar Wright got to see *Buckaroo Banzai* for the first time in 35 mm and with an audience. The audience didn't disappoint and applauded the film at the end. What did Wright think? It was now past 2:00 am, so all he said was, "I have now seen *Buckaroo Banzai*!" It's interesting to note, though, that Kevin Smith has mentioned three directors that he wants to helm episodes of a *Buckaroo Banzai* TV series; Richard Kelly, Edgar Wright, and Quentin Tarantino. 🐎



*Fun Fact: W.D. Richter was in the room when Walter Hill pitched *Hickey and Boggs* to a Warner Brothers executive. Richter tells the story like this:

"Just out of USC film school, I got what was called a 'Warner Bros. US Scholarship', essentially a paid intern/study job at WB in a department of my choosing. I chose Production, which meant becoming a willing exec's 'assistant'. I was taken under VP of Production Geoff Sanford's wing. Geoff's an agent now.

[From <http://www.rwsagency.com/>] 'Geoffrey Sanford came to Rabineau Wachter in 2003 after 20 years of running his own agency, where he served screenwriters and directors. Prior to that, Geoffrey was a vice president at Warner Bros.; head of the



Hollywood's Beverly Cinema, home of the Wright Stuff film festival in 2011. Photo by Steve Mattsson.

literary department at Creative Media Agency; and an agent at The Ziegler-Ross Agency. Geoffrey also worked for Otto Preminger and Columbia Pictures and legend has it, introduced Walter Hill to WD Richter, though Hill has absolutely no recollection of the perhaps apocryphal account.'

"WB had just instituted a program that offered Guild-Minimum \$7500 screenplay deals to aspiring first-time screenwriters who came to them as professionals working in other areas of the industry. Walter was a popular assistant director at the time, and he came in and pitched *Hickey and Boggs* to Geoff. I always sat quietly off to the side in those make-or-break meetings, a third wheel introduced as 'my assistant Rick'. But to alert would-be writers I think I was an unsettling, silent presence, an intermittent note-taker sitting mutely on the periphery. After Walter got the job, Geoff told me that a suspicious Mr. Hill asked him, 'Who the hell was that guy in the corner?'"

**Fun Fact II: Jordan Cronenweth was the Director of Photography for *Cutter's Way*. His next movie was *Blade Runner*. Who knows what might have been if Cronenweth was allowed to finish his work on *Buckaroo Banzai*?

***Editor's Bonus Fun Fact: In a May 2016 email to the editor, director W.D. Richter revealed that his favorite film is, in fact, *Doctor Strangelove*. Coincidence?



Fans Gather for Buckaroo Banzai Screening in Portland

By Steve Mattsson and Alan Smith

The Hollywood Theater in Portland, Oregon celebrated its 90th anniversary this year. The secret to their longevity: showing cool movies. Earlier this summer they presented *Buckaroo Banzai* on the big screen. Is it possible that such a happening could be made even better? Blue Blaze Irregular Jeremy Boutwell thought so. He created a Facebook Event for the Saturday evening showing called the “Banzai Institute Field Trip” and invited local fans to, “Strap in and prepare for adventure with Dr. Banzai, Perfect Tommy, New Jersey, Dr. Lizardo, and all the Johns in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* on 35mm at the Hollywood Theatre. Plans for pregame shenanigans may be made.” Unfortunately, I was unable to participate in the shenanigans, but BBI Dragon made the scene. Dragon, would you please tell us about it?

It went out on the internet that there would be a gathering of fans at a Sam’s Billiards* in the Hollywood district of Portland, Oregon.

Jeremy B. recalls, “I really didn’t know who all would show up other than my friend Jessica who rode with me. My friend Kristina came along to see the movie for her first time.”

There were another four who arrived and sat together, including BBI Dragon and Abacus. Dragon had his black Team Banzai jacket with the large patch on the back, and the Jetcar patch over the heart. It didn’t fit well, as over time he has gone from a medium to a hefty large. Abacus had a TB headband tied around her neck as a show of support.

Over microbrews and snacks, the small group chatted about their history with TABB. Jeremy B. later said, “I was surprised by the depth of knowledge you (Dragon and Abacus) brought about the film and the history of it. For the first time in my BB experience, I was in a room with people who knew more about the film than I did.”

When the show time approached, everyone finished up their beverages, and together walked the one block to the theater. For Jeremy B. this was his sixth time seeing TABB on the big screen.



Abacas and Dragon attend a screening of *Buckaroo Banzai* at the Hollywood Theater in Portland, OR.



My wife, BBI Crimson Cat, and I were able to make it to the Hollywood’s Saturday matinee. After receiving permission, I dropped off a large stack of *World Watch One* newsletters in the lobby. I saw an EMT colleague of mine who I have worked with for over 16 years and had no idea he was into *Buckaroo Banzai*. Crimson Cat and I got to see the movie together on the big screen for the third time. The theater was about two thirds full with several families and children seeing the movie for the first time. A new generation of Banzai fans joins the old.

Later, I returned solo for the evening showing. I ran into Dragon and Abacus. I met Jeremy for the first time. Inside I noticed that the large stack of newsletters had dwindled significantly. I purchased a pint of the Hollywood’s own 90th Anniversary Ale to refresh myself during the screening. The theater was at 90% capacity. Maj Britt “Red Phoenix” Baker made the rounds renewing old acquaintances. The lights dimmed and the very social audience took their seats. The movie started and they laughed and cheered in all the right places. At the conclusion, the movie received a deserved round of applause.

On my way out of the theater, I was pleased to note that all copies of the newsletter had been claimed.

In the fall of ’87, the last “official” *World Watch One* newsletter from 20th Century Fox was distributed. In the winter of ’89, Blue Blaze Irregulars, Alan “Dragon” Smith and Nancy “Abacus” Smith took up the gauntlet, writing two more issues on their own. Then, in 2004, Dragon teamed-up with Dan “Big Shoulders” Berger for a special 20th anniversary issue of *World Watch One*. This directly led to many more newsletters, including this “latest issue”. Many thanks to Dragon and Abacus for keeping the Team Banzai candle burning during dim times. 🐉

*Fun fact: Sam’s Billiards is owned by Paul Gulacy’s ex-wife. Paul Gulacy is a legendary comic book artist and a friend of the *World Watch One* newsletter.

The Blue Blaze Irregulars Bite the Big Apple

By Strike Team Manhattan

In October 2011, four Blue Blaze Irregulars, scattered across the country, gathered together in the heart of New York City to safeguard a very special screening of **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension!** Many will be familiar with their names from previous issues of this newsletter: Dan “Big Shoulders” Berger representing Chicago, IL, Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson hailing from Portland, OR, Sean “Figment” Murphy headquartered in the Washington D.C. metro area, and lone wolf operative ArcLight from Raleigh-Durham, NC. These are the members of Strike Team Manhattan. This is their story.

Dan: For me, this story begins in Plymouth, Michigan. I’m visiting my cousins in the summer of 1984 and stumble across one of the three recorded instances in history that 20th Century Fox paid to have a trailer for *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension!* aired on television. I watch and think, “It’s like science fiction and MTV had a baby that grew up following Wall of Voodoo concerts on Evel Knievel’s tour bus. I need to see this movie.”

A few weeks later, I’m riding shotgun in my friend Volker’s MG Midget convertible through a typical humid August evening in Chicago. Seeing *Buckaroo Banzai* is our objective. Including us, only six or seven people huddle in the cavernous air-conditioned splendor of the theatre to witness something improbable and uniquely awesome enter the world.

I’m sixteen. The movie leaves me baffled, but it also leaves me feeling like I just witnessed the first film I’ve ever seen about the hero I’d want to be in my own story. I don’t get it, but I like it. I want to know more.

Steve: It’s late summer in 1990. I’m on my first date with a young woman named Shaune, who I met dancing a week before. Over dinner at a Mongolian restaurant she tells me that her favorite movie is *Buckaroo Banzai*.

Flash forward twenty-one years; we’re married with two kids. I see that The Film Society of Lincoln Center has announced that they will show *Buckaroo Banzai* with several cast members in attendance. Wow.

Sean: My memories of the screening begin with an email from ArcLight, co-creator of the BB FAQ. He has some type of internet filter that scours the web for any mention of keywords related to Buckaroo Banzai. He discovered that “Kevin Smith’s SMoviola Presents: *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension!*” was happening at the Walter Reade Theater in New York on October 15th, 2011. Peter Weller and John Lithgow were going to be in attendance. That was awesome, a once in a lifetime chance to see the actors and the film I love together.

Dan: So, what did you do?

Sean: I panicked. I thought that I wouldn’t be able to get tickets. I was sure the event would quickly sell out. I hopped onto the web and paid for a year membership to the Film



John Lithgow (L) and Peter Weller (R) linger on the stage following their appearance at the 49th New York Film Festival screening of **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai**.

Society since early ticket orders could only be done by members. Once I’d paid I discovered that the Film Society wasn’t open after 5pm so I couldn’t place my order anyway. The next day I was able to secure tickets for myself and my wife, Conchi.

ArcLight: I don’t know exactly when the show was announced. It’s been awhile and I’ve slept since then. It was early enough that Big Shoulders began assembling a special edition newsletter for the event. He was going, FAQ-master Figment was going, Rainbow Kitty was going.

I wasn’t.

Money was the big issue. Flying to New York to watch a movie didn’t seem like the most cost-effective thing for me to do at the time. I’d end up eating ramen for a month if I made the trip.

Dan: I remember you having trouble justifying the fact that funding the trip would likely leave you eating microwave burritos for weeks afterwards.

ArcLight: If I’m honest with myself, the idea of a small-town rube like me heading into the heart of Manhattan was terrifying, too. Big Shoulders was having none of it, though, and the more he talked it up, the more I began to nose around online to see if maybe I could pull it off, after all. Before I could think better of it, I had my show tickets, a flight booked, and a room reserved.

I pulled my battered Team Banzai Adventure Jacket™ out of retirement, tossed a few things in a carry-on, and was on my way.

Steve: I'm the only one of the group who lives west of the Rockies, so how do I convince Shaune to let me fly from Portland to New York to watch a movie? I know, I'll invite her to come with me. She said, "Sounds fun!"

Serendipitously, the New York Comic-Con was taking place during the same weekend as the Film Festival and I was able to score a pro pass. This was an opportunity to do a special NYCC/NYFF edition of *World Watch One*. Our plan was to distribute Buckaroo Banzai newsletters to the cosplayers at the Javits Convention Center and the cognoscenti at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. On a tight deadline, we put together a greatest hits package from over twenty-five years of material from the Banzai Institute archives.

Dan: I've been to the East Coast before, but this was my first time in Manhattan. I was fortunate enough to stay with my high school friend Genevieve and her husband Laurence in their apartment near the New York University campus. I had just enough time to drop off my bags and give Gen a hug before running off to pick up the day pass Larry had arranged for me to attend the New York Comic Con, already in progress at the Javits Center. I made it in time to see Larry and director Michael Kantor's preview and Q&A for [Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle](#). The documentary was definitely a work in progress then, but it already had all the signs of future greatness. PBS was beginning to show interest in the project, but hadn't taken it on yet.

After the Q&A, Larry introduced me to one of the press people in attendance. We chatted briefly and I asked if he would be covering the Buckaroo Banzai screening. He was thinking about it, but hadn't committed to it yet.

ArcLight: I arrived late in the afternoon, the day before the show. The weather was overcast but I was in New York City so I had to go out for at least a short walk. I was staying right by Central Park so I went through it, seeking out the famous Bow Bridge, where Connor MacLeod met his friend Sunda Kastigar for the last time in *HIGHLANDER*. The drizzle that had been threatening all afternoon started turning more to rain so I worked my way out of the park, swinging by 55 Central Park West to make certain no Terror Dogs or giant marshmallow men were going to crash the party the following night.

Steve: Once in New York, I went directly to the con. After depositing a stack of newsletters on the freebee table, I caught up with a couple of old friends. Then I made my exit stage left. Attending a mega comic-con is like an expensive ride in a washing machine, only you end up less clean after the spin cycle. I needed to escape to the bustling streets of downtown Manhattan to get away from the crowds of the convention. True story.



World Watch One infiltrates Kevin Smith's SMoviola presentation of **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai**.

Now I have a little time to see a big town with Shaune. We saw the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the United Nations in under two hours taking the Circle Line Tour around lower Manhattan. Recommended if you're tight on time or money. While I was doing the tourist thing, I didn't know that at the same moment I was looking up at the Empire State Building from the boat, ArcLight was looking down at me from the observation deck on the 86th floor. Doc Savage maintained his offices on the 86th floor during the '30s. Apparently ArcLight has the hook up.

ArcLight: Got up early (extremely early, for me) the next day and set out to do the one thing I swore I'd do if ever I was in New York City. So I loaded up my Team Banzai Adventure Jacket™ with my chintzy camera and cell phone and proceeded to walk the twenty-five or thirty blocks to the Empire State Building. Google tells me the trip was about two miles and could be done in forty minutes. I'm sure my touristy version of the journey was longer in both respects as I angled off of the direct route several times just to see the city.

I spent several hours at the ESB, at least half of which was standing in lines to go stand in more lines (note to self: express pass next time) and of course went as high up as we were allowed. Asked to go higher but that was, not surprisingly, not an option. Still, for an old pulp fan such as myself, visiting the site of King Kong's demise and Doc Savage's headquarters had already made the trip worthwhile, and the main event was still to come.

Sean: Conchi and I arrived in NY, secured our hotel, and walked to meet Dan in person for the first time so we could all go grab some dinner. We eventually ended up in a Chinese restaurant, which was not very good as I recall, and then walked to the screening.

Dan: Ugh. I remember that we were shunted into a side room of the restaurant because we didn't have reservations, which apparently is kind of a thing if you're in downtown Manhattan on a Saturday night. The decor in the main dining area, what

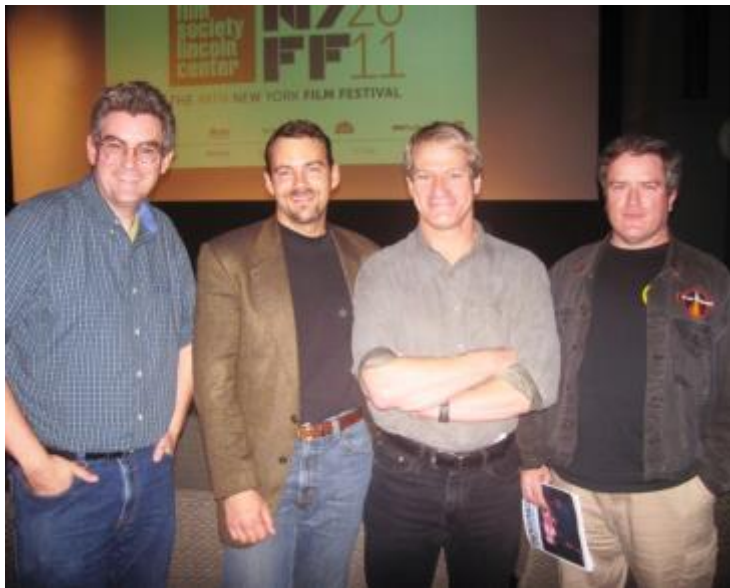
little we saw of it, was magnificently cheesy; like entering the palatial headquarters of some oriental supervillain. It kind of had “World Crime League” written all over it now that I think about it.

Sean: If I remember right, your shoes were hurting your feet. I think they were new and you hadn’t broken them in yet.

Dan: Yep. My feet were definitely the things being broken in, the shoes not so much.

Steve: After the tour, Shaune and I made our way to dinner at Le Cirque. This was part of the pay back to her for the trip. I had the poulet and she had the poisson from the “pre-theater menu”. It’s a special option for diners who need to make it to 7:30 pm shows—how very New York, New York.* Also, to this day I am 90% certain that our waiter was actor/director Jon Favreau researching a role.

We had to hurry across town, but we made it to the Lincoln Center with enough time to help distribute newsletters to the arriving audience.



Strike Team Manhattan, assemble! Figment (L), Big Shoulders (CL), Rainbow Kitty (CR) and ArcLight (R) commemorate their successful operations at the 49th New York Film Festival.

ArcLight: I headed to the theater; hanging around out front for a few minutes until the rest of the strike team arrived, bearing gifts for the movie-goers in attendance. Big Shoulders had copies of the World Watch One newsletter that had been put together for the show, and Figment had copies of the issue of Video Watchdog which held his article on the legendary TABB work print. The folks at the theater seemed a bit surprised by this, but they managed to scrounge up a small table to set up by the door to the auditorium so people could grab copies as they entered.

Dan: Score one for guerilla newsletter tactics and looking like you know what you’re doing. Funny thing is, the newsletters almost didn’t make it. Steve had set aside a stack of newsletters

for me to pick up at his hotel. Larry and Gen joined me on the subway ride to the hotel (which was on our way to Central Park if I remember right), and Larry graciously offered to go and pick up the newsletters for me while Gen and I waited in the station. He was gone for what seemed like a good twenty minutes, but he came back empty handed, saying that the lobby attendant had been given strict instructions to release the newsletters only to me. Apparently there had been at least two different WCL attempts to swap out World Watch One with dummy copies containing apocryphal and libelous statements regarding the Banzai Institute and director W.D. Richter’s goats. Score another point for Rainbow Kitty’s security protocols.

Steve: I had met Big Shoulders before in Peoria, at the home of science fiction Grand Master Philip José Farmer (because that’s the way we roll). I knew his name was “Dan.” Figment was engaging and taller than I expected. He introduced himself as “Sean.” I knew of ArcLight the longest from his on-line presence, but I had no idea of his real name. I knew only that he had some type of military background. I walked over and shook his hand. “Call me ArcLight,” he said. Two can play at this game—“The fellas call me Rainbow Kitty,” said I. He nodded silently. Now I like to try to come across as cool, but there is no way that I can pull off “secret identity” cool. Score this round to the man called ArcLight.

Sean: When we arrived at the theater I finally got to meet ArcLight for the first time in person, as well as Steve and his wife Shaune. ArcLight and I both started separate BB FAQ’s back in 1996. We eventually joined forces to create a combined FAQ site that still exists to this day. I also met Gareth-Michael Skarka, who I didn’t know at all, and discovered he was working on an official BB roleplaying game. Sadly this has still not been released (as noted elsewhere in this newsletter).

ArcLight: We went in and took our seats, enjoying the idea of seeing TABB in a packed theater, a good portion of which were already fans. A fair number were there only because they were Kevin Smith fans. He asked the audience how many had already seen the film but I really don’t remember the outcome. Seems like it was over half. It was definitely a kick to look around and see so many people checking out the newsletters and magazines we’d supplied.

Not long after we sat down, someone in the row in front of us called out to ‘Peter’ that he’d saved him a seat, so that’s how I got to watch the docudrama with Peter Weller sitting close enough that I could’ve about reached out and touched him. Don’t worry, I didn’t.

Watching the film is always fun, and watching it in an actual theater on the big screen with an appreciative audience is definitely recommended if you get the chance.

Sean: Kevin Smith then introduced Weller and Lithgow and talked about his love of the film. He described the film in one of the best ways I’ve ever heard; he called TABB an art house film. A light went off in my head when he said that. Once I

looked at the film with that filter, all of the random elements that make up the movie seemed to fall into place.

Steve: Later, Weller was expounding on the life lessons he learned from director Sidney Lumet, when an audience member in the front row began snoring. Weller paused to wake the fan up. Without missing a beat, Kevin Smith quipped, “He’s wide awake now. The dude just got bitch slapped by RoboCop!”

Dan: Talk about random chance—the dude who fell asleep in the front row was the same press guy I had met after the *Superheroes: A Never-Ending Battle* preview at NYCC the day before. Turns out the convention had been keeping him up past his bedtime for a couple of days and it caught up with him at the exact wrong time. Tough break for “Press Guy”, but it was pure poetry watching Weller take him down like a wounded gazelle.

Sean: When Smith got to the Q&A, I told Dan he should go give the newsletter to Smith, Weller, and Lithgow. Dan was nervous and not willing to go up to the stage but I couldn’t let this moment pass after all the hard work they’d put into the newsletter. I raised my hand and when Smith called on me, I grabbed three copies of the newsletter and Video Watchdog magazine and headed for the front of the stage. My heart was thumping, and in my throat, the entire time. As I got closer, Smith jokingly said, “Security!” and I stopped and hung my head in shame. He handed me the microphone and I explained about the special edition BB newsletter and Video Watchdog magazine for each of them. I gave the copies to Smith and he shared them with Weller and Lithgow.

Dan: And *that* was at least one third of the reason I didn’t want to walk up cold and hand out newsletters to the three of them. For us as fans, this was a rare moment to connect with the flesh and blood people who made something we hold dear. To Smith, Weller, and Lithgow, I would have been a complete stranger walking towards them with unknown motives. I didn’t want to go there. But score one for Sean. That took balls.

Steve: During the closing Q&A session, a member of the crowd compared Buckaroo Banzai’s box office disappointment to its effect on the creative community by paraphrasing Brian Eno, “Only 1,000 people bought The Velvet Underground’s first album, but every one of them started a band.”

Figment let Lithgow and Weller know that we were one of the 1000 who saw *Buckaroo Banzai* in the theaters and that it inspired us to start a band and our band is called the “World Watch One” newsletter. Figment then presented the fruits of our labor to Kevin Smith, John Lithgow, and Peter Weller. He even shook their hands. Figment is tall and he’s my hero.

Sean: Weller and Lithgow both left the theater without too many people bothering them. As we left, we happened to catch up with Lithgow and his wife as they were leaving the building. The last impression I have is of two ordinary people, hand in



Conchi Murphy (L), Sean “Figment” Murphy (C) and Shaune “Crimson Cat” Mattsson (R) chat prior to the screening of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Figment would later be the hero of the evening, delivering copies of *World Watch One* directly to Kevin Smith.

hand, walking down the street and merging into the NY City night, where just moments before there’d been a movie star.

ArcLight: Following the event, we found a cheap burger place and, joined by BBI Hepdog who had made the pilgrimage also, chowed down and talked all things Banzai until we had to part ways due to early flights and what have you.

The whole trip was a blast for me, from getting to experience New York City firsthand, to meeting fellow BBIs in-person who’d been only screen names for ten or more years previous, and of course seeing TABB on the big screen again and listening to Weller and Lithgow talk about the filming. If there was a blemish on the trip, it’s that my aforementioned chintzy camera, either because of getting caught in the rain or just because it was old and cheap, only ended up taking about half the pictures I snapped, and most of those came out pretty dodgy.

Dan: So, was the trip worth a few weeks of microwave burritos?

ArcLight: Overall, 10/10. I would eat ramen noodles for a month again if given another chance at such an opportunity.

Those craving more adventure can see the recorded Q&A between Smith, Weller, and Lithgow on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8R8wmlggwc>.



***Fun Fact:** “New York, New York” the novel and the screenplay for Martin Scorsese’s film “New York, New York” were written by Earl Mac Rauch, the creator of *Buckaroo Banzai*.

REVIEW: SHOUT! Factory Blu-Ray The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension!

By Dan Berger

Let's get something straight right off the bat; this is not a review of the film *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*. I mean, seriously. This is a Buckaroo Banzai fanzine. You just finished reading pages and pages filled with the kind of obscure behind-the-scenes details that only someone who has seen a movie a hundred times before would bother ingesting. We've all been drinking the kool-aid for a while now. What more do you need to hear?

To the ten fans on the planet that have not yet purchased this Blu-ray, here's what you need to know. First of all, it's too late to buy a copy directly from SHOUT! Factory. They sold out a while ago. Have no fear; the discs are still available through [a number of on-line retailers](#). If you want to buy a copy without paying collector prices, buy it sooner rather than later. SHOUT! Factory didn't press a million of them.

If you are reluctant to pull the trigger because you either a) doubt that the new Blu-ray is any better than the 2002 Special Edition DVD release, b) already purchased one of the over-seas Blu-ray releases, or c) are just recovering from a head wound and don't remember the last three months of your life, be assured that this Blu-ray is worth the price of admission.

At first glance, it is easy to look at the contents of the two disc Collector's Edition set and think, "So what? Big deal." For starters, the two discs are not exactly a true Blu-ray "set". Disc One is an actual Blu-ray. It contains the feature film and three bonus features; an all new documentary called "Into the 8th Dimension," a new audio commentary featuring Institute stalwarts Michael and Denise Okuda, and the audio commentary from the 2002 DVD release featuring W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch in the guise of Reno.

Disc Two is not a Blu-ray at all, but a standard DVD containing the balance of the bonus features; the "Buckaroo Banzai Declassified" featurette, the alternate film opening, deleted scenes, the "Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets and New Mysteries Jet Car trailer, and the film's 1984 theatrical trailer.

These features should sound familiar to fans of the Special Edition DVD. They are identical to the bonus material from the 2002 DVD, with several notable absences. Gone are the ["Pinky Carruthers 47,000 Unknown Facts"](#) subtitle track and the option to play a cut of the film featuring the alternate opening sequence with Jamie Lee Curtis and James Saito as young Buckaroo's parents. I have yet to encounter any of the Easter eggs from the Special Edition either, so several other goodies may remain the sole provenance of the 2002 DVD.

Disc One redeems the set with an excellent transfer of the film onto Blu-ray. The picture looks great, especially those parts



filmed by Director of Photography Jordan Cronenweth before his untimely release. Cronenweth also features prominently in the set's most desirable asset, the aforementioned "Into the 8th Dimension." This all new documentary is a heaping two hours and seven minutes of behind-the-scenes goodness divided into eight sections; "The Origin", "The Cast", "Making the Movie", "Design Elements", "Visual Effects", "Post Production", "The Release", and "Beyond Banzai". Each section presents a wealth of information, much of it new, which will amaze and delight die-hard fans of the film even after repeated viewings.

Also of interest is the new audio commentary track by Banzai super fans and *Star Trek* veterans Michael and Denise Okuda. The Okudas are amiable and clearly have their facts down about the film, but they occasionally drift into excesses of nostalgia and detail (there are only so many times you need to be told when there is a box of "Screaming Yellow Zonkers" on screen). Fans should listen to the commentary at least once, but will likely favor a return to the new documentary afterwards.

The *Buckaroo Banzai* set is the first release in SHOUT! Factory's new "Shout Select" series of films. As such, the film clearly gets as much star treatment as the budget for a cult classic will allow. The results do not disappoint. There is more than adequate reason between the Okudas' commentary and the "Into the 8th Dimension" documentary to justify the Blu-ray's purchase. And really, who are we kidding? If you didn't purchase one by now, you're doing it wrong. Saddle up 🐎

The Final Word and Things to Come

By Dan Berger

For the most part, *World Watch One* has been a straight forward editorial proposition. Only so much material can be reasonably gathered up once per issue over the course of months and, sometimes, years. As noted at the beginning of this issue, foraging for revelatory information after a film has been around for thirty two years is a tough gig. Every once in a while something unforeseen pops up on the radar, but the interval between these opportunities to explore new information tends to expand over time.

Or that's what I thought until this issue.

Originally, this round of the newsletter was supposed to be released in August. The main thrust of the articles would have featured the SHOUT! Factory Blue-ray; a detail that didn't quite go as planned. A funny thing happened as July turned into August. Kevin Smith's *Buckaroo Banzai* TV series began to gain traction as the franchise's long overdue appearance as a weekly event on the small screen.

Rumblings of another sort were emerging behind the scenes as well. Emails from W.D. Richter began to arrive at the *World Watch One* offices regarding the ownership of the underlying rights to the characters and creator status of the *Buckaroo Banzai* franchise. We were able to include some of Richter's legwork on the subject in "From Mister Cigars to Lepers from Saturn", regarding Buckaroo's script development featured in this issue. But we were sworn to secrecy regarding the legal implications being explored. Now Richter has authorized details to be revealed in [his interview with Rich Drees](#) that was teased earlier in this issue.

The "passion of the rights" surrounding *Buckaroo Banzai* have been an ongoing story covered by us for many years now. This is a particularly sensitive time for the emergence of the rights issues with an active *Buckaroo Banzai* television series in development. It is unclear what, if any, effect the legal wrangling will have on current and future Banzai projects as the letters fly between Team Richter and MGM/Universal.

All of this drama unfolded as our efforts on the latest issue were wrapping up after a period of chronic extensions due to a shocking abundance of Banzai goodness unleashed, in part, by all of the current interest in Buckaroo amongst the science fiction fan community. We could have continued to add more articles onto this edition (at least three or four articles proposed for this issue remain in active development for next time), pushing the release date forward indefinitely. It was time to call it "done."

So, what to take away from all of the hoopla?

Well, for starters, it's pretty likely that we will have a potential abundance of stories for future installments of *World Watch One*. It would not be overly optimistic to expect a new issue sometime in the spring of 2017.



We have several active stories to cover at the moment. They are:

- Ongoing development of the *Buckaroo Banzai* television series.
- Release of another forthcoming *Buckaroo Banzai* project, pending announcement.
- The ongoing legal discussion regarding rights issues between MGM/Universal and Team Richter.
- The growing number of *Buckaroo Banzai* related film events cropping up at various media conventions and local movie theaters across the country.

We also are also covering Buckaroo's comic book adventures on several fronts, both at Moonstone Books and amongst a number of comic book artists who took a crack at drawing Buckaroo over the years, both before and after the good doctor's official comic book adventures.

All of that sounds pretty good to our ears. The pages of future *World Watch One* installments are intimidatingly blank at the conclusion of every issue. Now there appears to be plenty of excitement for fans to talk about, and talk about it we shall. We can't help but feel a little uneasy about anything involving lawyers and their effects on the media properties we love, but it is comforting to think that Buckaroo has toughed-out legal ambiguities in the past and made a future for himself regardless. As the Yoyodyne corporate moto notes, "The future is tomorrow". We'll have plenty more to say when we get there. 🐾